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Bridge to Africa





**BRIDGE TO AFRICA**



# Bridge to Africa

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By L. K. ANDERSON & W. SHERMAN SKINNER

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TO THE BRIDGE BUILDER

*Whose faith has spanned the roughest seas  
and left us wondering at the mysterious  
ways of God*



## FOREWORD

TRUTH may still be stranger than fiction, but it is not to prove this axiom that the following story is told. The important thing here is not the strangeness of the truth, but the truth of this strange chain of events, and the truth of the principle they illustrate. It is a truth so profound, and yet so simple and so basic to everyday living, that none of us ought to think it strange.

Some assurance ought to be given, however, that the story related here actually happened between the spring of 1934 and the spring of 1938. Fictitious names have been used for the American persons and places, but not for the African. Obviously there are bits of conversation, incidental actions, now and then even a date, which have had to be supplied where notes and memories failed. In a very few instances the scene of a remark or an action has been shifted, to avoid making an entirely separate episode, but in no case has this been done where it would in the slightest degree affect the relationships or the significance of parts of the story.

Apart from such minor details, the whole series of events occurred exactly as they appear in these pages. Many a witness on either side of the Atlantic could be called to testify to them. Conversations or letters in which native Africans were involved have been rather literally translated out of the Bulu and much of their picturesque idiom preserved.

Some of the letters quoted in the tale have actually been preserved and were used. There is a considerable mass of records and correspondence against which it has been possible to check the memories of the authors and others involved. Above all, the story is corroborated by a great building looming up in the African bush, where thousands of people worship. Ask them, and they will tell you. And if that is not enough, climb up to the peak of the roof at the west gable and look for the letters carved there in the cement capping.

The story has been written because so many friends, who have heard it told, have thought it ought to be made available to others. It is sent forth with the prayer that it may bring to the faith of others a little of the strength it has brought to our own.

LLEWELLYN K. ANDERSON  
W. SHERMAN SKINNER



## I

THE DISTANT INTONATIONS of the call drum needed no interpretation to the waiting masons. The shadow from the mighty kapok tree had long since warned them that five o'clock would soon set all the workmen free. Trowels had been carefully washed and dried; there was no danger of cement being left over, as the last mixing had been used up a full half-hour ago. Laughing lustily, as only an African can at any pleasantry when leisure awaits, the men trailed across the clearing. The half-built walls of the new school building waited, silent in the cooling dusk of the African evening. Two hornbills swooped gracefully overhead, beating upward to new heights with frantic flapping of wings only to dip down to lower levels, seemingly borne earthward with the weight of their grotesque heads. There followed a flock of gray parrots, scolding and screeching their way to the haven of some jungle tree. The dampness of night began its evening triumph, its clammy tentacles reaching out through the val-

leys, mingling with the smoke of the fires which seeped through the thatched roofs of countless huts.

Unaware of nature's evening curtsey, a khaki-clad figure, perched upon the mason's unfinished wall, shivered and then proceeded to descend the makeshift ladder. Allan MacLean was nearing the end of his three-year term in Cameroun, West Africa. Weary but unmistakably happy he stopped, hands thrust deep in the pockets of his shorts, and surveyed the scene about him. Three brick buildings, two school-houses and a teacher's residence, formed the sides of a pretty quadrangle, neatly graded and terraced. Three years before the place had been nothing but a shambles of broken-down huts and ground cut deep with rain ditches. Order out of chaos! It gave the missionary a feeling of deep satisfaction to see this transformation not only in property but also in the lives around him. Soon the quadrangle would be filled with running, calloused, bare feet, white soles beneath brown spindle-legs; laughing, noisy schoolboys hurrying over the newly-made paths, and overflowing the paths to crush the carefully sodded lawns. It was just as he had planned, a vision realized.

Another figure approached, an African dressed in immaculate white.

"Mbolo," came the greeting, "another day has gone. What heat we had today! Truly we have reached the season of burning feet."

"Mbolo, Pastor Mvondo," was the rejoinder, "the masons have been declaring that since they were born no burning foot season such as this has ever been felt before. The rains cannot be far away."

"But when it rains, Monti, what are we going to do of a Sunday morning? Pray you, look at that church roof. Since the roof blew down last rainy season it has offered no more shelter than a tortoise shell pierced with holes."

Together the two men walked into the gloomy, barn-like structure, now almost completely dark. High above them the dilapidated raffia-leaf thatch brooded like a dense jungle covering. Trickle of evening sunset, struggling through the many holes, bore mute evidence to the need of repair. Huge poles sunk deep into the earth supported this massive, matted roof, and even though they were new, the destructive termites were already pasting their busy channels over the bark, brown warning signals of destruction and decay going on within. The only supports resisting these tropical warriors of destruction were those that had taken root and were already sprouting branches and leaves, pushing up through the roof to the sunlight and rain above.

It was a desolate sight, even with the darkness softening the ravages of termites and time. A huge barn of desolation, capable of seating a thousand people, tattered dark walls, unplanned boards serving for seats—nothing but the purpose for which it was dedicated could possibly dignify the place as a house of God. A few hens were stuffily turning themselves around on the pulpit rail trying to find some suitable inch of footing to roost upon.

“Ehl Monti,” spoke Pastor Mvondo, “when I see that beautiful church of ours at Elat, where the Tribe of God can gather to worship, and then when I see this place of rain puddles, chickens, and dogs, my heart refuses to sit down in peace. Build, repair, and rebuild, but God’s house is always a rotting place. When shall we at Bafia find money to build a real temple of God?”

The two men, having chased the protesting hens from their customary night quarters, were standing at the side entrance looking back at the neat school quadrangle, all dark and new and clean. And there came to Allan MacLean a dream, a new dream of a glorious house of God, standing just where he stood, completing that grassy square, some-

thing simple and beautiful and worshipful, built to the glory of God, for the ministry to the souls of men.

"Pastor Mvondo!" he almost whispered, "the temple of God you speak about would stand right here. Look! It would fit so perfectly into the plan of our new school town. And is it not a shame to us that to teach the boys we have these pretty buildings but to worship our God we have but a hen-roost? But—no, such a building needs much money and a builder to build it. Your church at Elat cost many thousands of francs and half the amount was given by your tribe which is so rich in cocoa and other produce. Where would the so-poor Bafia see that much wealth?"

"You talk as a white man," chuckled the pastor, "always counting the cost, always raising objections. We have wealth down in the Bulu country 'tis true, but Monti, with wealth comes pride, pride that forbids the soiling of the hands with menial tasks and honest labor. Would it cost so much if we build such a building with our own hands? You could direct the building. Are there any more beautiful buildings than these of this school town?"

A franklin whistled its evening song. The light of the smoky fires squeezed through the narrow doorways of nearby huts, promising boiling, earthen pots of cornmeal mush for the laborers.

The silence was broken by the white man.

"Could the people be depended upon to do the work? I doubt it very much. See the trouble we have had in this so small a work, always pushing, always running to and fro from the brick kiln to the forest, from sawmen to carpenters—and these men are being paid! Of all the trouble! No, it would be impossible, Mvondo."

"I shall ask the men, the elders of the church, the old men of the towns, and all the young fellows. Tomorrow I shall

begin this thing. You will have their answer presently. Walk well, and sleep well!"

Slowly the white man walked the star-lit path up to his bark bungalow set on a hill. At dinner that night Catherine MacLean had to ask her husband three times if he wanted the usual second cup of tea. But a missionary's wife gets used to these mental lapses of optimistic visionaries.

That night he lay staring long at the cotton roof of the mosquito net hung over the bed. How many bricks in a wall ninety feet long, twelve feet high? What kind of a roof? How much cement. . . ?

And so the dream was born.

## II

On a Sunday afternoon in May, 1934, the wide porch of the mission residence was filled to capacity with a happy, almost boisterous group of Africans. Silent, rubber-soled shoes and hard, scraping, bare feet, all contributed to that expectant shuffle that is the African doorbell. Cola nuts were being passed around, split, and finally crunched upon by glistening teeth, as everyone waited for the missionary to appear.

He came out, adjusting dark glasses to his eyes to ward off the glare from the gravel path that led past the house. The usual amenities of African conversation once over, the spokesman, a white-haired Bafia man, came directly to the point.

"We have talked this palaver over many days. You leave tomorrow to cross the salt river to your country to rejoin your tribe. But it is not simply to say 'Go well' that we have gathered here. It is this building matter. We have no money for such a thing. In America is much money. But we have hands, and we have sons who can work. Above all we have

willing hearts, and if God has spoken to our hearts saying, 'Build me a house', who are we to refuse? You have measured such a house with your measuring vine; you have counted the brick; you know the cost. Here are our bodies. Ask your friends who have been so good to us already to give us the necessary wealth, and we shall offer freely of our strength. Together we shall build a house of God."

A chorus of assenting grunts followed this noble speech, as all shifted their bodies to a more comfortable position.

"O Father Nyung," replied the missionary, "this kind of talk gives my heart great joy, but I have two things to say in answer. First, you yourself know that 'wind blows strong at first, but dies in the rain'. Your promises of help in the building are sincere, and you believe it. But when those long days of laying brick upon brick arrive, when the sun turns brown skins black—no, I don't think it can be done. I have written my brother missionaries about this plan and they all say, 'It is a fine idea, but it can't be done'.

"Secondly, O Nyung, you have heard that money is no more in America; it is finished, and those who have it, hide it. They do not give to strangers across the river of salt. Look! headmen calling for teachers that we cannot supply. If such a sum could be found, would it not be better to open up these dark corners of your country to the teaching and preaching of the Word?"

Old Nyung stood up, hitched his loin cloth importantly, and stowing his cola nut in one cheek, began to talk, looking around on the expectant circle of faces about him.

"What you say, Monti, is true. But I too have truth in my belly. To answer your first fastening. . . . It is true the wind blows strong at first, but that wind at times in its fury and strength blows huge kapok trees from their roots, twists the giants of the forest like pieces of elephant grass; it levels whole villages at a sweep; it is irresistible as long as it lasts.

Who makes the wind? Moubel God, it is He! And He can make wind blow as long as He likes. Monti, my friend, God has called us to build Him a house. We can do it.

"Then for the next thing, you say there is no more money. Have the metals and paper all finished in the world? Or have men lost their skill in carving metals and drawing images on paper money? Some may be hiding their money, but Moubel God will find one to build the house of God. 'One night does not rot an elephant'—we can wait."

All eyes were again fixed on the white man, waiting for the argument that would seek to unite the fastenings of old Nyung.

But no speech came. MacLean sat silent, trying to rid himself of those ever-present warnings of common sense which come from sheer reasoning, the thrill of simple faith in God struggling to break through.

Slowly he turned to the African pastor.

"Mvondo, some time ago you said I talked like a white man, counting the cost. Now I talk like a black man." Then looking around at the expectant listeners, he said, "My brothers, you are all witnesses to this plan. Days ahead, if God gives us wealth to build Him a house, remember your promises. Enough. It is settled! Tomorrow I return to my country to see what He will give. Remember this work in prayer."



## I

THE NOONDAY RAYS of the November sun slanted through the windows of the little Baynton church, shooting the reds and blues and greens of the stained glass into the aisle. The young minister, walking down toward the chancel, his head bowed in thought, tried to avoid stepping on those splashes of color, but they jumped up onto the black of his flowing robe for a moment as he passed.

He loved the peace and quiet of the church after shaking hands with the last of his congregation. Often he wished these greetings at the door could be omitted. He was interested in his people and loved them enough to miss no chance to be among them, but the conduct of worship and the preaching of a sermon took so much out of him, and took him so much out of himself, that he sometimes wished he could avoid meeting them all immediately in the small talk of every day.

It was good now, however, to walk back through the silence of the church alone. There had been an especially up-

lifting spirit in the service that morning. It had been a thrill to himself, he was thinking as he went down the aisle, skimming his hand across the tops of the pew-ends. Somehow a sermon on prayer was always of interest to the congregation. Perhaps there were more who tried in one way or another to pray than there were who practised any of the other duties or expressions of religion. At least, that would explain why a sermon on prayer seemed to grip them.

Passing beyond the color-studded aisle and going up into the pulpit for his notes, he paused there for a moment, wondering whether he had really conveyed the idea he wanted to express. The people had been unusually attentive, and many at the door had seemed grateful; but how many of them would really understand what he had found difficulty expressing? Had he made clear what he meant by prayer with utter abandon, a kind of all-out prayer that did not stop with asking for little things of personal concern, but also gave itself to seeking perfect harmony with the will of God?

No, he answered himself as he turned and descended from the pulpit, of course they had not got it. They never did. Moreover he was not fool enough to suppose the fault was theirs. He knew too well and too painfully where the trouble lay. Slamming the door of the robing room behind him was the only adequate expression of the way he felt about the whole business of preaching.

"Here! here! Rockwell," he said to himself half-aloud, as he began the contortions of disrobing. "You promised yourself you wouldn't think about your preaching until long after it was past. You know you always feel disgusted with yourself after you are through, whether you ought to or not. So cut it out!"

The Reverend George Rockwell slipped into his vest and coat and hurried down the long corridor of the parish house.

As he neared the door leading out to the street, he found one of his most faithful members waiting.

"Say, that sermon certainly hit me this morning," the man smiled as he put out his hand in greeting.

MacDonald Robinson, so Rockwell had come to think in his two years in Baynton, was one of the modern saints, and the preacher wondered how this man could have been "hit." In particular Robinson was a man experienced in much prayer. He could tell, although he rarely did so, how some of the best-known bridges in the country had been built by prayer. He would insist that was how he had gained his reputation as a bridge engineer. He also had the great humility of a saint.

"What could I ever tell you about prayer?" the minister asked.

"Well, you certainly made me do a lot of thinking this morning," the older man replied. After a pause, he continued, "I'm worried about Mrs. Robinson."

"Is she worse?" asked the younger man in immediate concern.

"No. That is, she is not growing worse any more rapidly than she has for the past few years. But now she has begun to pray that she may die. What do you think I ought to say to her?"

Ida Robinson had been sick for twenty-nine years, ever since the birth of their only son, John. Slowly but steadily, except for brief periods of hope with a new doctor or a new climate, she had declined until now she was bedridden, misshapen, and suffering untold agony. No friend could have wished more for her than any release from her pain. What ought her husband to say to her?

"I . . . don't . . . know," answered Rockwell hesitantly. He was reluctant to try to advise a man of such faith and experience. His first dismay, however, was not so much at

the problem in prayer on his parishioner's mind as at the apparent defeat of Mrs. Robinson. The magnificent and indomitable faith of the woman through all her suffering had been his inspiration. She was one Christian who found in her religion the strength to rise above the worst that could come to her. Now it looked as if she were giving up.

"Well, you don't think it's right to pray that you may die, do you?" demanded Robinson, amazed that his pastor was not more shocked. "It doesn't seem right."

"I don't know," said Rockwell again. It was too much for him at this hour on a Sunday. It depressed him especially today, for he had just preached on prayer, and now a man of experience was presenting a real situation in prayer with which he had apparently given no help. Or had he? Was this not the very kind of thing of which he had been speaking? Perhaps that was what had made Robinson think.

"I'm not so sure it is wrong for her to pray to die," he began at last as he turned to the older man. "I've never forgotten one thing my father used to say. I was with him once when we overheard an elderly woman in her last illness making a sort of complaint to God, and he said, 'That is the kind of prayer the Father likes to hear. He wants to know exactly what is on the hearts of His children.' Do you think that might apply to this prayer of Mrs. Robinson's?"

"I suppose so," Robinson admitted after a long pause. And then, "I never thought of that before. . . . But that would still make it right for me to go on praying for her health, wouldn't it?"

"Yes indeed," Rockwell assured him. The light in the hall suddenly went out, and the slippers of the sexton were heard scraping toward them around the corner. "Let's step outside. The patience of Michael lasts only so long on Sunday, and then he punctuates all conversations with the light-switch and the latch-key."

Stopping at the foot of the steps Rockwell said, "You know, Mr. Robinson, I'm wondering whether what I was trying to say this morning doesn't apply to us in this case."

"You mean we haven't been seeking the will of God?" asked his parishioner.

"Perhaps. I'm afraid we haven't been praying hard enough or selflessly enough for the divine will to be worked out in Mrs. Robinson's case."

"Probably you are right," confessed Robinson. "This trouble has gone on so long. . . . I'm afraid . . . sometimes . . . sometimes it becomes an old story . . . and I haven't been as faithful about it as I might have been."

"Would you be willing to begin a new kind of campaign of prayer with me, of urgent prayer, staking every ounce of faith we've got on it, for something to happen with Mrs. Robinson? for some solution? for God's will to be done with her?" the minister asked.

"I certainly would," the other replied, "but don't you think we ought to have her cooperation, too?"

"Yes," said Rockwell, and added, "but I'm sure she'll give it."

"Well, you'll have to talk with her about it," Robinson said. "After the way I spoke this morning when she told me she was praying to die, I think it would mean more if you would do it. Tell her what you were saying in your sermon this morning."

"All right. I'll see her within a couple of days." He held out his hand and they shook in agreement and farewell. "I think we can be absolutely sure something will happen," Rockwell added as they parted.

Hope and enthusiasm warmed his heart. Perhaps the things he had tried to say that morning had not been entirely in vain after all.

## II

Two days later the sun was somewhere, but it was not shining in the little room where Ida Robinson lay. Through the window over the foot of her bed the sky was a solid mass of cloud. A vast grayness had settled over Baynton as it did so often in the fall. There was no light, and no shadow except on the barren branches against the unpainted house next door. It was a negative day, or at least uncertain, with the world poised between darkness and light, between storm and calm. The grayness seemed to fill the room, too. No sound broke the stillness, except Ida's own labored breathing.

George Rockwell, leaning forward in his chair beside the bed with his elbows on his knees, looked out the window not knowing what to say. Then Ida asked the question on his mind.

"Is it wrong to pray for me to die?"

She had made it far easier than he had expected by telling him as soon as he entered the room that she had begun to pray for her life to be taken and now by asking him whether he thought that was wrong.

"I'm not so sure it's wrong," he conceded at last.

"But you're not very sure it's right, either," she smiled as her twisted hands tried to straighten out the counterpane.

"It's not exactly that," George went on slowly, "but I sometimes wonder whether most of us go far enough with our prayer." He stopped and then turned quickly to the sick woman and asked, "Did Mr. Robinson tell you I was coming to see you soon?"

"No. Why?" She turned toward her visitor with obvious effort.

"I just wondered whether he had told you what we were talking about on Sunday." Rockwell paused and gazed out

the window again. What right had he to try to tell anything about prayer to a person who had won the battles she had won? Was it not the most natural thing in the world for her to feel, after twenty-nine years, that it must be God's will for her not to get better? Was she not falling in with that will if she prayed for death?

"I suppose he told you then that I was praying to die?" Ida surmised.

George nodded without looking at her.

"And you were just as shocked as he was, and think I'm a lost soul," she continued.

"Not at all, not at all," George interrupted. "Quite the contrary, I think it's a perfectly natural thing for you to want."

Ida turned so quickly to look at him that she winced with the pain.

"I also think it's perfectly natural for Mr. Robinson to want you to get well and continue to pray for that," he went on. "But he and I both confessed we hadn't been doing all the praying we could, and agreed to begin a new and intense effort to pray, for all we're worth, for . . ."

"Just the same thing over again?" she interrupted with weariness in her voice. "Again and again in the past twenty-nine years we've begun all over again praying more faithfully for health and strength, and . . . and . . . well, I have been given a lot of strength, for which I am thankful . . . but, beyond that . . . just another twisted finger, or another pain, or . . ."

"You've put up a magnificent fight," George said.

"I'm afraid not," she demurred. "It just isn't intended for me to get better, so why should I go on struggling about it? And now you want me to begin all over again!" Complete weariness was in her words.

"No, I don't want just that," her pastor corrected her.

"I was saying in church Sunday morning that we are sometimes too much concerned with what our little petitions ought to be in detail. Some of us are too selfish to think out beyond our own present wants, and some of us are uncertain about what it is right to ask for. The result is that all too seldom are we able to throw ourselves with every bit of force we have into our prayer.

"I didn't mean to preach my sermon over to you," Rockwell smiled before he went on. "There is one prayer we can always offer with absolute assurance: that is, for God's will to be done and for us to be in harmony with it, whatever it is. We all always want that, and when we really mean that, we can pray what we will with utter abandon and believe He will answer with the best possible solution. We can be perfectly satisfied with the outcome."

"It seems quite plain His will is for me not to get well," Ida reminded him.

"So it seems to you!" her caller said, "and to your husband it is not possible to believe anything but that you are supposed to live. To me . . . well, I think I can understand how both of you feel. Now, what is God's will? Yours or Mr. Robinson's, or something else? The only thing we can be absolutely sure of is that we want His eternal will to be done. We can all pray urgently for that, at the same time expressing the personal desires of our hearts—you yours, and your husband his."

"And what shall we expect to happen?" she asked doubtfully.

"One thing I'm sure of," Rockwell answered; "we shall all have a sense of deep satisfaction and peace. Beyond that . . . ." The words hung in mid-air. There was a long silence with no sound but the rasping breath of the sick woman. Then the young man went on: "You see . . . I suppose most people would think I'm crazy; but to me

there seems to be so much of answer to prayer, so much of what others might call curious coincidence, which can only be explained by a divine mind and power, that I think of a whole realm of supernatural forces at work all the time. We don't see them. But now and then in prayer we puncture the veil of our human blindness and reach through to make contact with that world." He paused with a sense of being helpless to express what he felt. Ida Robinson, however, was strangely intent on what he was saying, and he went on.

"We can never tell what connection the things we are doing and saying here may have with others anywhere else. The most remarkable things have happened. It is as if a connecting line passed from here into that unfathomable sphere of divine knowledge to come out in some other earthly situation, but we do not see where."

Ida's eyes were fixed quietly on her young pastor's face. Now she spoke. "You mean that what we do, and what happens to me, may be connected with events somewhere else that we know nothing about?"

"Possibly," Rockwell smiled at her as if he knew she thought he was dreaming. Then he sobered as he went on, "Certainly your illness, and the courage and strength you have had through it, have had a profound influence on a lot of people already. Only the other day a woman, whom I think you do not know but who has heard of you, said to me, 'Whenever I get depressed and start to pity myself, all I have to do is think of Mrs. Robinson.'"

Ida closed her eyes for a moment, and he wondered what she was thinking. She opened them to ask, "Is that what you mean by something here affecting others elsewhere?"

"Yes," he replied, "but I also mean more than that. In that way, but also in some other which we do not know, I believe the suffering you have been going through has been for some purpose—to accomplish something. That is the whole

point." Rockwell stood up now as he waxed more intense. "I don't know why all this should have come to you. But if He's a loving God, there must be some reason. And we'll be doing the most we can for you and for everybody else, if we pray with utter abandon—for His will to be done. If we do, even if it means, as you hope, that you will pass on soon, there is also some far bigger thing than we can now see which will be accomplished."

He stopped short and dropped into his chair again. After a moment's silence he said quietly, "I didn't come here to deliver a lecture. Forgive me. But will you join with Mr. Robinson and me in that prayer with all the faith we've got?"

"How could I refuse?" she smiled up at him. "If your enthusiasm and conviction can be made into prayer, something ought to happen."

"Nothing about me will make any difference," objected Rockwell, "but something is bound to happen."

He rose to take his leave, but Ida put out her hand, motioning him down and reaching for his hand as she asked, "Did MacDonald tell you I am leaving for Virginia next week? They think the climate will be better for me down there through the winter."

"We'll miss you; but I'm awfully glad you can go," Rockwell replied.

She pulled him toward her by the hand and asked, "Could we have prayer before you go?"

With her hand in his, he poured out his heart with the kind of passion which a man restrains in all his talk with his fellow men and can only unleash to his God. It was a simple prayer and unadorned, its only beauty that of a human heart straining to reach up to a Supreme Being and throwing itself down before Him in humble trust.

Ida tightened her grip on his hand as she said, "Good-bye." There was nothing more to say.



## I

BEFORE ROCKWELL had parked his car a little toot of the engine's whistle, like the dot at the end of a sentence, told him that the train had already disgorged its Baynton load, and he hurried through the station. It was more than four years since he had seen MacLean, and he wondered what changes Africa might have made in his friend. His glance leaped quickly from face to face in the hurrying crowd on the platform and pounced at last on the deep-set eyes and little black mustache of MacLean.

"Hello, Allan!" he called, as he wormed his way through the tangle of suitcases and overcoats and saw his friend starting off in another direction. "Allan!"

"How are you, George?" MacLean turned and called back across the human stream flowing between them, and at last they managed to get their hands together.

As soon as they were in his car, Rockwell drove out onto the road winding up North Mountain. It was a favorite drive for any guests he had, and there would just be time before

they dressed for dinner. It was always a relief to him to go up from the valley cluttered with the steel mills to the peak where he could see for miles, and breathe all the air in the sky.

Today on each westward swing of the zigzag road they were sailing right up into the blazing but cold and lonely yellow of a setting winter sun; and then as they doubled back to the east, every rock and bush and tree was spattered with a golden glow. A satisfying feeling of triumphant power always surged up in Rockwell as his car seemed almost to bend forward on that turning, lifting road and finally straighten up and roll easily out onto the level of the peak. Perhaps it was the way he would like to feel about his efforts in a world often as dark and unclean as that valley. Perhaps it was a kind of physical expression of what his faith did inside him. Whatever it was, it made him especially happy today. He had so much deeply in common with MacLean that he was always completely at peace in his presence, and Allan had a strange capacity for lifting his spirits even as the motor was now taking them both up the hill. The level rays of the sun were gilding everything with a tint of just the right mood.

"There's Baynton for you," said George as the car came to a stop at the stone wall built to command the best view of the valley. The emergency brake clicked into place, and they got out and climbed the parapet and stood looking down in silence.

Rockwell often wondered if others were as much impressed as he had first been with the miles and miles of steel mills stretching down the river to the east. There were huge, barn-like hulks humped up between long, low roofs. The great bellying cylinders of the blast-furnaces stuck up frighteningly, almost causing one to shudder, as if the body of this sleeping giant in the valley had been slit open and

some of its vital organs exposed. Row on row, in perfect order, tall, black stack after stack stood at attention down the bank of the river into the distance.

In other years every one of those stacks would have been belching clouds of smoke, some black, some yellow, some white; and at frequent intervals the dusky sky in the east would have blazed brightly with the glow from a car-load of white-hot slag being dumped down around the bend in the river. But now this monster, sprawled along the bank of the stream, was almost dead. A lazy wisp of smoke drifted out of a stack here and there in the lifeless ranks, but there were few other signs of activity. The depression had sapped the vitality of the mills, and that meant it had worked untold hardship on the people of Baynton.

The sun was practically gone now, leaving only yellow streaks across the sky at the upper end of the valley. As the light faded rapidly, the cold winter darkness crowded down in a rush to fill all the space between the mountains. In a futile effort to stave it off little lights began to come to life all over the valley. Here and there a lonely lamp burned on a farm out beyond the city. Directly beneath the two men the pattern of the Baynton streets became distinctly marked by their rows of lights, and then windows all over the city began to shine until it looked as if a starlit sky were somehow inverted and sparkling below them.

All at once a vast arch of two rows of lights spanned the valley down at their left as the bridge from one hill to the other across the town was illuminated for the night. "That's quite a bridge you've got there," said MacLean.

"Yes, it's supposed to have been something of an engineering feat to put it up just as it is," explained Rockwell.

"I should think it might be," Allan agreed.

"Well," Rockwell went on, "there's no place in the country that ought to be better able to produce that kind of a wonder.

The bridge-building division of Baynton Steel has done some of the biggest jobs standing today."

"It's all a mystery to me, how they do it," said his guest.

"It is to me, too." Then after a moment, Rockwell said, "By the way, speaking of bridges, Dr. van Zandt was here two weeks ago in the series you're speaking in tonight, and he certainly knows how to appeal to his audience."

"What did he talk about?" asked MacLean.

"He talked about bridges. Since most of our congregation are with the steel company, bridge-building was right up their alley."

"I thought this was a series on foreign missions," interjected the missionary.

"It is," replied his host with a smile, "and van Zandt was talking about missions. He talked about the world enterprise of the Church as a means of bridging the differences between nations and races and cultures all over the world. He was going to bridge the Atlantic and the Pacific and the Mediterranean and everything else with the Christian Gospel."

"Did he make his point?" Allan asked.

"He certainly did. His most effective illustration was a bridge over a river somewhere in northern China. The building of it had cemented two communities or provinces or something together. After the meeting one of our men came up to him and asked if he was referring to such-and-such a bridge—I don't know its name—and when he admitted he was, the man said the company had erected it and he had been sent over there on the job."

"What are you trying chiefly to do in this series?" MacLean continued his questioning; "I ought to know what's expected of me."

"Well, I'll tell you," began Rockwell. "There was a time when I had no more interest in missions than the average man sitting in one of those offices down there. I thought there

was an inescapable necessity of doing something about it in the church, but I was sure no one would get excited about it except some elderly women at an afternoon of knitting, who had lost all other interest in life." Rockwell turned directly to his friend as he went on.

"Then a time came when I had to find out something more about it for myself, and I discovered it to be the most thrilling chapter I know in the history of the world. I don't need to tell you that, after the experience you have had; and others I tell won't believe it. One factor in changing my feeling has been some of the missionaries I have come to know. I think many of you men out there on the field, in the midst of nationalistic movements and tangled international relations, are doing the most constructive thinking in all the realm of Christianity. You have to preach and teach a Gospel that will come to grips with the grimmest realities.

"Anyway, I'm completely sold on it; and I don't see why the rest of the people in the church can't come to the same feeling. So for these six Wednesday supper meetings I've asked the best men I could think of to try to do to the others what has been done to me." He was facing his friend with a look, and speaking with a voice, that said plainly, "That's what I'd like you to do."

MacLean broke into a contagious little laugh and said, "You don't want much, do you?"

"You can do it, if anyone can," George added. It was now quite dark and nearing the time for them to be at the church, and he jumped down from the wall as he said, "I'm afraid we must be going. We'll be crossing that bridge down there in a minute."

From the mountain top where they had been able to see so far, they coasted quickly down again into the dirty, buzzing city.

## II

The fresh logs falling onto the fire sent a column of sparks racing up the chimney. When the screen was back in place, Rockwell straightened up, brushed his hands off against each other, and said:

"That was a grand job you did tonight, Mac."

Allan was sitting on the edge of the davenport before the fireplace, his elbows on his knees, staring into the flames. In the nervous fatigue caused by the strain of a public address, he shook his head slowly from side to side without taking his gaze from the fire, and replied:

"I never know what I ought to say."

"Too bad about you!" George nodded in mock agreement as he smiled down at his friend. "Poor little Allan! Never knows what to say. But people sit on the edges of their chairs, and fawning fans will not let him go, and next morning's mail brings unsolicited checks for his work. Too bad about you!"

"Nope. . . . You're dreaming," the missionary said, twirling his key-ring on his finger and watching it, half interested.

Rockwell moved over to rest one elbow on the mantelpiece with his hand supporting the back of his head. "If you ever let yourself go to an audience like that tonight, as you did five years ago with the story of your elephant hunt, they'd listen for three hours and want more."

MacLean leaned back in the corner of the davenport with a faint smile on his face and said, "A lot of good that would do. They'd want to know whether their money was going to send out missionaries or big-game hunters."

"I know," Rockwell said. "Don't take me too seriously." He moved over and sat down at his end of the davenport, looking into the fire. "It's just too bad that the things that are often most interesting to the average layman are not the

things that mean the most. Sometimes I am so anxious to keep the people interested in this whole business, I forget for a moment that the only really driving motive back of the enterprise is something far deeper."

The two men sat watching the dance of the flames before them, the minister leaning forward, absorbed, his guest at the other side relaxed. There was no sound in the long, dimly-lighted room except the crackling of the logs and the quiet ticking of a clock on the desk in the far corner.

At length Rockwell leaned back, stretching out his legs toward the hearth, and said, "Well, it was a fine talk you gave tonight, anyway. You could tell that by the attention the people gave you."

"I hope it did some good," MacLean said.

His host chuckled as he went on, "Some of the men got quite a kick out of your difficulties in training the Africans to be masons."

"They can be the most lovable and yet most exasperating people in the world," MacLean admitted. "They're such perfect mimics that when you tell them to do something the way you do it, they reproduce it exactly, even to your mistakes. When we were building our little schoolhouse, one morning I showed a group of my masons how I wanted the wall done and then left on a trip back into the bush. Apparently the third brick I had laid was slightly out of line; and when I came back a week later they had done a whole section of the wall with every third brick exactly as much out of position as mine had been."

"By the way, Allan, you wouldn't have been exaggerating a little over at the church, would you, when you said you preach to from eight to twelve hundred people every Sunday?" George looked over at his guest out of the corner of his eye with a faint smile of incredulity.

"No, indeed," was the quick retort; "and once every three

months we serve communion to six hundred on a Sunday, with two thousand at one service in the morning."

"I thought this station you're in had only been open about ten years." The pastor was recalling at the same time that his own church was about seventy-five years old and was lucky to have three hundred and fifty people at worship on a Sunday morning.

"That's right," said MacLean. "Twelve years to be exact."

"Well, what sort of a church building do you have that will seat a congregation like that?"

"That's the sad part of the story," Allan began to answer, and broke out into his contagious laugh with a little shrug of the shoulders and a slight tilting back of the head which was his usual approach to any difficulty. "We have a great, flimsy, thatched roof of raffia, full of holes, held up by a lot of unsteady poles. There are no side walls, and the pigs and chickens are much enamoured of the place. You can imagine how much respect the natives have for it, and how much atmosphere it gives a service. I long for a worshipful church because I *know* how much it would mean to those people. It would make a tremendous difference in their idea of reverence." He had grown terribly serious while saying this, but the smile began to come again. "And the whole crazy thing we have now blows down every time we get a high wind. It happened once just before we sailed for home. Oh, it's great."

"What a big help that must be!" Rockwell sympathized.

MacLean sobered suddenly, sat up straight, and turning to his host, looked at him directly as he asked, "You don't know anybody who has \$5,000 he'd like to give us for building a church, do you?"

"I'm afraid not," George half laughed. "You flatter me. There's been too much depression for the last six years. Oh, there's plenty of money still in the hands of plenty of people.

But they have been a lot harder up than usual and have not been making much, and they think they haven't got anything."

"I was afraid you'd say that." The missionary's gaze went slowly back to the fire.

Then Rockwell turned upon him with a new thought. "But what could you do with \$5,000 anyway?"

"Build a church," Allan smiled quietly into the fire.

"You're crazy," his friend exclaimed. "Why this little church of ours cost something like \$50,000 twenty-five years ago, and it will seat only three hundred."

"I know," MacLean agreed, "but this is a different matter." He stood up and took out the key-ring to begin twirling it again. "I've got an idea that everybody else thinks is nonsense—except the Africans at our station. As you heard me saying over at the church tonight, we've learned how to make excellent brick out of the local clay there. We've also found that it's strong enough to make a good tile. We've got a whole jungle of wood around us. I think with contributed labor from the Africans we can build a church that will seat a thousand people for about \$5,000."

"I don't know much about it," said George, looking up at the other's face which had suddenly taken on new light and life, "but why do you say everyone else thinks it's nonsense?"

"I'm thinking chiefly of the other missionaries in West Africa," MacLean answered. "They've tried using free labor, voluntarily contributed, in several other places, and they say it simply won't work. I still think it can be done, and I still believe this church could be built at Bafia."

"Then why not raise the money and give it a try—that is, after this depression is over? I don't know where you could find it now." Rockwell's enthusiasm had begun to rise, until it came up against the financial obstacle again, and then his voice trailed off into leaden tones.

"That's the only difficulty as far as I'm concerned," said Allan, and he sank down on the davenport again. "That's insurmountable just now, I guess. The Board doesn't want us to ask for any special gifts this year. We need all we can get for general maintenance."

"That's tough," was all George had to say.

There was a long silence. The logs had burned themselves down to glowing embers. MacLean sat with elbows on knees and chin in hands looking into the dying fire. He guessed his dream of a church at Bafia was going out like that blaze. It had burned brightly for a while, but could not go on. Now and then some enthusiasm, like George's, would fan it to life for a moment, like the end of one of those charred logs breaking out in a new fluttering flame; but it could not last long, and the real fire was gone.

Rockwell leaned back in his corner staring into the same bed of red coals, but thinking very different thoughts. He was betting that smouldering log that his friend would somehow find the money he needed. He had never known him to fail. But then . . . maybe the other missionaries were right, and it could not be done. Perhaps it was far better for Allan that the country was in a depression and he could not get the funds.

Just then the little laugh came bubbling from MacLean again, and he said, "There's a man up in Scranton who wants to give me \$5,000 for a pipe-organ, but he would not be interested in a church. That's his passion; he gives everybody pipe-organs. Wouldn't that do me a lot of good out there!"

"But are you really not being allowed to ask for special gifts such as this?" asked his host.

"No," he said, "I'm not supposed even to talk about it. You're the only person in the country I've ever mentioned it to."

"I'm afraid you didn't pick the brightest prospect," suggested George.

"I probably shouldn't even have brought it up to you," Allan went on. "I had no intention of doing it. No, I'm afraid it's a wild dream just now. It'll just have to wait."

He continued to look long and hard into the fireplace, the dream lingering as persistently as the glowing embers, brightening and fading with the draft. Then he half closed his eyes for a moment and straightened up, as though in doing so he could bury the dream under the ashes and forget it. Taking the kind of long, deep breath that drops the curtain on a finished act, he sank back into the cushions.

Rockwell got up to put another log on the fire.

### III

The day following the conversation of the two men in the Baynton manse was as dismal and dreary as any that MacLean had experienced on his furlough. Even the rainy days of the wet season in Africa have their moments of bright sunshine when the mountainous rain-filled clouds are dissipated by the fierceness of the tropical sun. But this was sodden murk. Little patches of dirty snow, covered by the grime of furnace blasts in the steel mills, only emphasized the utter despondency of the morning.

Seated in the day coach of the train, on his way back to Exton, MacLean stared through the spotted windows at the forlorn landscape. The gaunt black chimneys of the steel furnaces pointed heavenward, not as the glowing beacons of industry promising strong girders of steel to bridge some turbulent torrent, but more like charred trunks of trees in a fire-swept forest, dead and useless; once alive and fruitful, now black and barren. The city streets seemed to rush by, colorless and dirty. A stray dog nosing

around in a garbage dump, automobiles at the level crossings waiting for the train to pass, even the dismal clanging of the warning bell at each street intersection dying mournfully in the distance, aroused in him a feeling of indescribable loneliness and discouragement.

This was no strange reaction to the man seated in the train. The weather and the flitting landscape only helped to accentuate the feeling of depression that lay heavily upon him. He always approached with hopeful anticipation each new opportunity of securing help and of creating interest in the work which was so near his heart. Then after it was all over, the reaction seemed to be inevitable. True, in this case, Rockwell's enthusiasm had been a rare experience. The intelligent questionings of the previous night, even the reference to the need of a new church building at Bafia, had been encouraging, but that in itself was not enough to offset the apparent hopelessness of ever trying to awaken the Church in America to any conception of the need in far-off Africa.

The train was now hurtling through the wintry countryside. Occasional small herds of cattle in barnyards, their backs to the icy blasts, huddled together for warmth. Not a sign of activity anywhere, only the rushing of the train and the rhythmic rumble of the wheels created any impression of life. MacLean's musings grew darker and darker. He knew he was no speaker, no orator. How could he expect any response to a missionary appeal? Even if he had been able to move the congregation of the church at Baynton to a greater interest in the work across the seas, how could they afford to help? The steel mills, on which the city depended for its very existence, were working under less than half their capacity. Many men were unemployed, the women and children in actual want. The church itself was suffering from the industrial collapse everywhere in evidence.

Now the train was trundling slowly across a bridge that spanned the Delaware. Isolated blocks of ice drifted in the slate gray water beneath. Gray water, gray ice, gray rocks, gray sky, all reflected the grayness of his soul. Only the bridge was black and solid, something comforting in its massive ruggedness, overcoming the elements raging above and beneath it. The steel for this bridge probably came from Baynton, MacLean thought. It had been white hot at one time, almost alive in its flexible, malleable state. Strangely enough, this thought seemed to bring comfort.

Why fight any longer against the inevitable? The return trip to Africa was less than four months off. It had been impossible to make any direct appeal for the church building at Bafia. No one with a soul sensitive to the need of the hordes of unemployed in America could bring himself to make such a request. After all, the old bark church had served its purpose for years. Perhaps it would be a much happier solution to adopt some simple, primitive plan for a place of worship. Perhaps some sort of terraced hollow, an amphitheatre, without roof, a place of worship quite in keeping with the African surroundings, would be better. Gazing at the back of the green plush seat in front of him, MacLean began to muse on this new idea. It began to take shape as the train slowed down at a station. The jolting of the brakes as the car came to a stop woke him from his reverie. The outside world had been forgotten for a few minutes; he had been back in sunny Bafia. It was quite a shock to look out over a sea of shiny umbrellas and dripping raincoats. Rains in Africa! Terrible, devastating rains, day after day, week after week, sometimes. A church without a roof? No, that would be impossible. Services in the old church had often been literally washed out of the building.

Wearily MacLean trudged up to his apartment, enveloped in a drizzling mist. His wife was out when he arrived. After

changing his wet clothes, he drew up a chair to his desk and wrote in the Bulu language:

January 8, 1935

Mbolo Mvondo,

Many nights have passed since I wrote to you. It is not that I have forgotten you and all the friends at Bafia. I have been busy speaking to many people about our work. I have been waiting for good news to send to you about the new church, but there is no news.

You will remember it was said before we left Bafia, that great hardship is to be found all over our country. Many people are hungry and they have no work. Everywhere we go we find nothing but trouble, trouble. As for me, I cannot help thinking that perhaps God has some other plans for us in the building of this new house. Perhaps we shall find a new way of repairing the old house or of making a house without the need of much money. We shall see what God will show us.

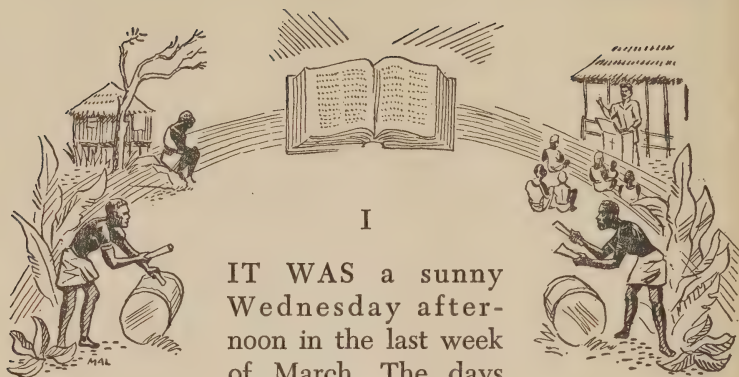
Please tell all the friends of Bafia that we shall continue to hope and pray for some gift to help us, but I thought it would be a good thing to tell you all that there is no trail leading to anyone who may be able to help. It is better that they have this bad news now than when we return in June.

There is much trouble in this land and we have heard that it may not be possible to send back missionaries to help in the work. We shall have to depend still more on you men who have done so much to carry the Good News all over your country. Tell the workers at Bafia to keep on working hard and keep their faith strong in our Father God.

My wife and daughter join me in sending many askings to all those in your family. We are well. God bless you all.

Your friend in the Faith,

Allan MacLean.



## I

IT WAS a sunny Wednesday afternoon in the last week of March. The days were becoming ap-

preciably longer and the slanting rays of the setting sun brought warmth with them into the little sitting room of the apartment at Exton. Children home from school shouted noisily as they played in the street below. A breath of spring was in the air and the world seemed glad.

Catherine MacLean sat in a corner of the room listening to the radio, a billowy haze of theatrical gauze surrounding her. Even a rough bark shack can be made beautiful and homelike with little touches of color, with attractive curtains and decorative hangings. For days now she had been preparing for the return to the little bungalow at Bafia. Each window and door had been measured before coming on furlough, and now the curtains were taking shape, well designed to fit in with the color scheme of rustic brown bark.

The door to the bedroom, also used as a study, opened and MacLean entered the sitting room, a letter in his hand and a puzzled frown upon his face. He drew a small stool up to the chair occupied by his wife and spread the letter on his knee.

"How shall I answer this letter?" he asked.

His wife dropped her hands and looked at him some moments before replying.

"What can you say? You have written Mvondo, telling him how hopeless it is to expect help. Surely by this time he realizes the impossibility of getting funds to build that church."

"Evidently he hasn't, or he wouldn't have written this letter. Listen to this . . . . ."

"As you requested in your letter, I read the news to the people last Sunday. After the service we had a meeting of the elders and there we discussed the palaver. We have decided to set apart certain times for certain groups to pray that God will lead you to someone who will give you the necessary wealth to build this house of God. Many of the people have responded to this idea so you must know that much prayer is being offered to God, at all times, for this thing. Nothing is able to overcome God in strength; nothing is impossible for God.'"

"It is not that I blame them," continued MacLean; "we have been preaching to these people and teaching them that prayer is effectual, that God answers prayer. Now, when perhaps the greatest volume of corporate prayer is being offered up since Christianity came to Bafia, they are going to be disappointed. What will the effect be?"

"After all," his wife interjected, "\$5,000 isn't so very much. Can't we appeal to someone somewhere, who will be interested enough to help in this situation? I feel sure that if you were to explain the beautiful faith of these Africans, there are many Christians who would be only too glad to help."

"Whom would you suggest?" challenged MacLean.

There was a long pause. Impatiently MacLean reached forward and switched off the radio. Mrs. MacLean resumed

her sewing, her eyes following the work mechanically, almost unseeing, as if searching beyond the work at hand for some solution to the problem. Her husband folded and refolded the letter in his hands. The shouts of the children outside accentuated the stillness within the room.

"Of course," mused MacLean in a low voice, "the fault probably lies with me. I haven't once made an appeal for this project. Perhaps I have been expecting God to dump the money in my pocket, all of a sudden, without my making any effort to get it. I guess He doesn't do things that way.

"But how can I ask?" he burst forth, raising his voice "when all about us we see this want and suffering. Every church we visit is so in debt because of its own buildings and commitments, we can't suggest their going further in debt to build a church in Africa. If we start asking individuals, it will take much longer than the three months remaining of our furlough to collect \$5,000 in small contributions."

"It seems too bad," said Mrs. MacLean, "that we see so much being spent on pleasure and entertainment, in spite of the depression, and there is still not enough to do this one thing that will mean so much to Bafia, for years to come."

"That's the way of the world," her husband answered.

For two days, ever since the delivery of this letter on Monday morning, a burden of disappointment, made doubly heavy by this sense of personal failure and defeat, had weighed heavily upon him. He had failed the people of Bafia. All through the furlough he had been taken up with so many other pressing duties that he had to admit this church building plan had often been forgotten. To the people in Bafia it had remained uppermost in their minds as a great hope, and evidently something taken for granted. How could he return to them and admit failure?

"What can you do with people like that, anyway?" he

asked, as if blaming the Bafia tribesmen for their unswerving faith. "They must realize that their ideas are not always God's plan. Perhaps it is just pride that has egged us on. Other places in Africa have permanent structures for their churches and so we at Bafia had to keep up with them. That is hardly Christian, is it? The African has always carried out his ceremonies and his gatherings in the open air without benefit of buildings, why shouldn't we continue to do so? Wouldn't it be better to develop something purely African? Why shouldn't we gather in a grove of trees or . . . ?"

"Don't rationalize, dear, and don't evade the issue," Mrs. MacLean broke in. "We have encouraged these lovable people to expect great things from God. They have set their hearts on a place of worship, a place of reverence and beauty, they are praying for it and . . . ."

The ringing of the doorbell interrupted the discussion.

"That will be the postman, he's late," MacLean said as he strode out into the hallway and descended the stairs to the mailboxes at the entrance to the apartments.

He returned to the room carrying three letters. Two he handed to his wife, the third he ripped open as he sat down again on the stool near her chair. There was a brief silence as man and wife became absorbed in the letters before them.

Mrs. MacLean glanced up from her reading to find the eyes of her husband fixed staringly upon her. His mouth was open and a faint flush colored his face.

"What's the matter?" she demanded, somewhat disturbed.

The man dropped his eyes to the letter that was trembling slightly in his hand. It was some time before he could read.

"Whom is it from?" demanded his wife, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Listen," replied MacLean, in a voice filled with emotion,

"it's from George Rockwell at Baynton, I'll read it to you . . . . .

" . . . . . you may remember our talking, among other things, of the church your people had in Africa. You said at that time that you were hoping to build a permanent building when you return, if sufficient funds could be found. You said that you thought \$5,000 would be sufficient. I think I may have that money for you. I am not going to tell you any of the details because the plan may not work out. However, I am so happy about the possibility that I could not keep from writing to you. Don't be planning too much until you hear from me because it may not turn out as I hope. As yet it is all very indefinite.

As soon as there is anything further to report, you may be sure I shall let you know.

Best wishes to all of you.

Sincerely,

GEORGE.' "

The eyes of the two missionaries met. In the eyes of the wife could be seen a triumphant, "There you are!" The eyes of the man dropped and the flush deepened as he bowed his head in his hands. After the depression of the last two days resulting from the letter of his African friend, this climax came as a sudden awakening after a bad dream. Mentally he was feeling about to determine whether he was still dreaming. One emotion followed swiftly on another and through all was the assurance of the victorious faith of the Africans, thrown into sharp relief by the utter insufficiency of his own.

"I hope we won't be disappointed, and that the plan will materialize," Mrs. MacLean ventured at last.

"I know it will!" cried the new-found faith springing up in MacLean's heart.

## II

It had happened early in March.

George Rockwell, home from a Monday afternoon's calling and flushed from a hot shower, was singing his way into his clothes when his wife brought him a telephone message.

"It's Mr. Robinson's office. He won't be able to come to dinner. A long distance call came from Virginia, and he's gone already. His wife is much worse."

The young minister sank down on the edge of the bed, one arm in a shirtsleeve. He knew this must mean the end of Mrs. Robinson's life, but for some reason the news did not settle down on him with the cloud of grief he might have expected. It rather brought him up short, as if, in the midst of his everyday human pilgrimage, the voice of God had suddenly spoken down out of the blue to him.

His first reaction was that all their campaign of prayer had been in vain. Then he checked that train of thought. After all, if this was the end it was exactly what Ida wanted. Did it all mean something more than that? Was it, as he had reasoned it might be, the means of working out some larger divine purpose which they could not see? His eyes went on above the city lamps and roofs into the boundless blue of the winter twilight. He was reaching far out beyond for some answer which did not come.

Then MacDonald Robinson came into his thinking—for the first time, strangely enough; and George wondered what this would mean to him. The second thought of him, however, was to smile at any concern about such a mountain of faith. He would have some satisfying answer. He always did.

Rockwell was almost expecting the telephone call from Virginia the next morning, asking him to make funeral arrangements for Thursday. He was not at all surprised at the natural steadiness of Mr. Robinson's voice in all the con-

versation, except for a moment when he said he had arrived too late: his wife had been gone for a couple of hours.

The same magnificent spirit of a man whose hope and assurance go far beyond this world and life held Robinson in perfect poise through the week.

The following Monday night as George Rockwell jumped out of his car and went quickly up the short walk to Robinson's bungalow, he was wondering what the engineer had on his mind. Yesterday after church he had asked his pastor to come and see him as soon as possible when they could have some extended time together.

When Robinson himself responded to the ring and opened the door, it seemed apparent that he was rather anxiously awaiting his visitor. So absorbed was he in whatever business was on his mind that he could waste little time in greetings and trivialities. They were barely seated when he started in.

"Thank you for coming out. I simply had to talk with you about Ida's death. I knew I wouldn't be happy till I did."

It was a moment or two before he went on, but then he began as if some straining flood-gates had at last broken open to let a whirling torrent sweep down. "I feel as if her death is a part of some larger plan—God's plan. We had agreed to join in an all out campaign of prayer that His will for her be done. God is answering that prayer with his own plan."

"A week ago last Saturday," the engineer continued, "that is the Saturday before she died, after a special period of prayer I had a definite sense of God's forgiveness and love, and of His guidance in all parts of my life. A wonderful sense of peace and satisfaction came over me. From that moment I knew Ida was not going to get well. Yet, curiously enough, I was perfectly satisfied about it all.

"That was Saturday night—or rather, Sunday morning. I went to bed and slept like a child. All day Sunday I felt

better than I have in years. That strange feeling of complete confidence and relief stayed with me, and there was no longer anything weighing me down. I was walking on the clouds all day.

"It was the same way again Monday. Then about four-thirty in the afternoon came the telephone call from Virginia, and I knew what it meant."

Rockwell was so completely lost in his friend's tale that he could say nothing. After a moment's silence the other leaned back in his chair and spoke again. "There now, I've got that off my chest. You can imagine that it's been a little hard to tell you all this. But we were working together in our little prayer campaign for Ida and I felt I wanted to tell you about it."

After another pause, Rockwell finally said: "I appreciate your wanting to tell me. It is a remarkable experience you have had. And . . . and there is this to remember, too: our prayers have been answered as Mrs. Robinson wanted them to be, if not in just the way you and I had hoped." To himself he wondered if they had seen all the answer yet. Could it be that the taking of this woman's life comprised the whole will of God for her? Were there in this matter any of those far-reaching, unseen relationships in which he liked to think these little affairs of ours are often inextricably entangled? Well, he would not talk of that now. Robinson seemed strangely satisfied, so he would not stir him up with new questions. But . . . . .

"Now, there is another thing I wanted to talk about with you." The older man had shifted his position, crossing one leg over the other. There was a new note in his voice, and a different light in his face as he spoke.

"I have two paid-up insurance policies, of \$2,500 each, of which Ida was the beneficiary. I want to turn the proceeds

over to you, to put to some good use, as a kind of memorial to her."

"Well, that's a wonderful thing for you to do," responded Rockwell, "but I shouldn't want the responsibility of deciding where it ought to go."

"Yes, but I want you to do it. You know far better than I do where it is needed."

"I can easily put you in touch with people who will know where it can be put to use in the work of the Church," the younger man went on.

"But," the engineer persisted, "I want *you* to decide where it will go." Then, as the minister began to wonder where it might be used—twice \$2,500—the older man pressed on, "How about the fellow from Africa who was here? What was his name? MacLean?"

Like the contact point where the two lines of an electric current come together to make light, that name was the juncture at which all at once a line of events in America and a stream of life in Africa first touched each other.

"Say," said Rockwell as he suddenly remembered that \$5,000 was the amount for which Allan MacLean had thought he could build his church at Bafia. Without too much detail he proceeded to tell of the conversation he had had with the missionary that night, of Allan's vision of a church, of his confidence that he could build one to seat a thousand or twelve hundred for \$5,000, of the fact that he had been requested on this furlough not to ask the churches for special gifts.

"That's exactly what I want to do with it," Robinson broke in on the story. "It's decided. Nothing could possibly have made Ida happier. It's as good as done."

Rockwell was not accustomed to having decisions involving such sums of money made so quickly. He knew, moreover, that his friend did not have a great deal, and he

was not at all sure that he ought to be giving so much away. "Hadn't you better wait a bit for a final decision?" he asked.

"No," came the quick response; "that's exactly what I want to do. It's all settled."

"You'd better think it over for a few days," repeated his pastor.

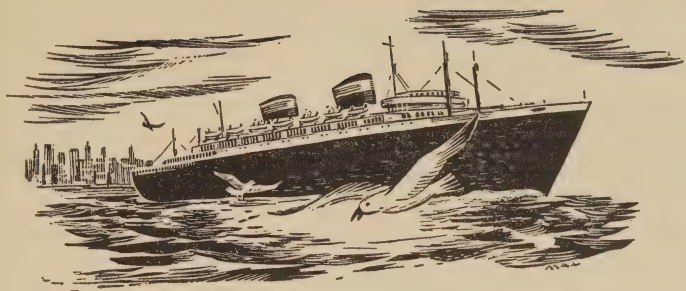
"Yes, it will be a few days before I can get the necessary papers made out and signed . . . ." He stopped short and a cloud came over his face. After a moment's pause he went on slowly, "There is one difficulty of which I hadn't thought. John, as our son, is a second beneficiary on those policies, and I would have to get him to sign a waiver . . . Hmm . . . I'm afraid he will not be very enthusiastic about this." He sat in silence for a moment. "Well, that will work out all right somehow. I don't know just how yet. But it will."

Robinson was so absorbed in this sudden new interest, his mind was going out in so many different directions as he contemplated the working out of the details, that he was a new man and could talk of little else.

Rockwell left his friend with his new thoughts and went home with his own. What a thrill this would be to Allan! He would not go to bed till he had written the letter. No. He'd better wait. There were too many possibilities that the plan would never work out: there was John; he would never agree. No, the letter to Allan must wait. It would be a shame to get his hopes up and then dash them to the ground again. Perhaps, on the other hand, he ought to have the encouragement of knowing there was a possibility. Could Allan really do this thing on that amount of money anyway? If it proved impossible, what a blow that would be to Mr. Robinson! Perhaps he had spoken too quickly and unadvisedly. But, could this be . . . ?

It was a fiercely cold and fiercely bright night by the time he reached the door of the manse. It was good to find his

wife on the sofa before the fire. He sank down beside her, looking into the fire where a charred log was breaking again into bright flame, like the burning anew of the dream which a few weeks before his friend MacLean had buried there in the ashes.



## I

SUNDAY dawned crystal clear, one of the first real days of spring. The MacLeans had been invited to the Baynton manse to meet MacDonald Robinson, and Allan had been asked to occupy the pulpit that morning.

After the service Mary Rockwell accompanied Robinson and her visitors back to the manse while George attended to the inevitable details that fall upon the pastor of a church after the congregation has been dismissed. She left the guests in the living room and went to the kitchen.

It was the first time the bridge builder and the missionaries had met since the extraordinary events of the past few weeks. A sense of expectancy filled the room, the feeling that comes at times when one realizes that an important event is taking place.

The desire to satisfy a thousand and one questions made MacLean restless, as the conversation centered around the morning service, the congregation, the weather, and the town of Baynton. Robinson talked of the wide-spread influence of the Baynton Church under the leadership of George Rockwell.

"And so it goes," he said. "Mr. Rockwell fits in beautifully with every type and class in the congregation. To executives and laborers alike, to rich and poor, he is a beloved pastor. To me, during this time of testing and loss, he has been a true friend and comforter."

The conversation drifted on to the work of the church, its problems and its successes. It seemed difficult to approach the subject that was uppermost in their minds.

"Needless to say," MacLean finally interjected, during a lull in the conversation, "we are all deeply grateful to you for your generous gift for the African church."

"It is not my gift," replied Robinson; "I was merely the agent to whom has been given the joy of sharing in this experience. Perhaps Mr. Rockwell has told you something of the story that lies behind the gift."

MacLean nodded assent.

"To me," continued Robinson, "the whole thing is a beautiful answer to a prayer she so often prayed while she was lying in bed, those long, long years of suffering, and especially to one last prayer . . . ." His voice trailed off into silence.

"It is an extraordinary series of events," MacLean agreed. "To us it seemed a miracle to have this word come from Mr. Rockwell just two days after a letter from Africa assured us of the continued prayers of the native Christians for their new church. We, I must confess, had given up hope of ever securing the necessary funds. It has been a great lesson to us, and will always be a help to our own weak faith."

MacDonald Robinson nodded in agreement.

"I know just how you feel," he went on; "we are just beginning to see a plan that started some time ago. One of the greatest desires of my wife, something that I could not understand at the time, is now seen to fit in perfectly with a group of people and with their great faith in the power of

God, miles away in Africa. Isn't it a joy to be able to share in this?"

Rockwell arrived from the church just as his wife was announcing dinner. It was a happy gathering of kindred spirits. The missionaries looked across at the large man who had come so suddenly and so dramatically into their lives and the lives of their African friends. It was the beginning of a friendship that was to last through the years, helping and sustaining through sickness, temptation and accomplishment.

"We are all so interested in the way the prayers of the African Christians seem to have found an answer in the events that have been occupying our attention for the past few months in Baynton," George Rockwell began, "that I think the MacLeans should hear some of those stories you have told me about your experiences in answered prayer in your bridge building." He nodded to the engineer, as if urging him to carry on from that point.

Robinson, looking somewhat embarrassed, toyed with the silver at his place.

"There is really nothing very unusual in these experiences," he stated simply. "I'm sure we all have had similar direct answers to our prayers in emergencies and when faced with insurmountable difficulties. It just happens that in my case the help which God has given me has been of such a practical nature and has resulted in so many actual engineering developments, that they appear more dramatic than others."

In an unassuming way he began to relate a series of amazing incidents, connected with many a major piece of bridge construction in the United States. The others at the table were fascinated by this account of faith that had overcome difficulty after difficulty. Time and again, amid the pressure of failing contracts and time schedules, this Christian engineer had left the scene of harassed construction gangs and frantic designers to spend time with God, laying before

Him the immediate problem, rising from his knees confident that a plan would be forthcoming. And invariably it was.

As MacLean listened to these stories, told in such a direct, commonplace manner, he found the courage and confidence he needed to face the realization of what had been a vague, undefined dream. A curious uneasiness had been troubling him ever since the first effects of the good news had worn off. There were so many problems to be faced and so many difficulties to be overcome in this building program that it was a tonic to hear how prayer had solved major engineering difficulties in immense construction jobs.

After dinner the three men withdrew to the pastor's study to discuss the subject that was uppermost in their minds.

"Tell me, Mr. MacLean," said Robinson, "what kind of church are you planning to build?"

"I really have no definite plan in mind," MacLean replied. "That has been the problem uppermost in my thoughts. I have been hoping that we could find an architect, some Christian who would give the benefit of his training to the building of the church."

"That will be difficult to find, I fear," George Rockwell ventured. "Is there anyone here in Baynton?" he asked, turning to Robinson.

"I can't think of anyone at the moment," was the rejoinder. "How elaborate is the building to be? Will it need the services of an architect?"

"It certainly will, if I have to do the building," replied MacLean. "If you could see the schoolhouses that we built this last term on the field, you would realize the need of some very definite planning for a building as large as this church will have to be."

"How large a church are you planning, then?" Rockwell continued.

"The average congregation at Bafia, as you know, ranges

between eight hundred and a thousand. On our communion Sundays when the members from the surrounding chapels come in to the station, we shall have to plan for two thousand and more."

"That is going to be quite a building then," Robinson mused; "what materials will you be using? Will the roof be constructed of steel?"

"No, that will be far too expensive, if you consider freight and duty to West Africa. The walls will probably be built of brick. We have clay on the station property that makes fairly good brick, and there is plenty of wood to burn it. The roof will probably be clay or cement tile. This will be so heavy that the roof trusses will have to be substantial. We have plenty of hard wood. One kind of hard mahogany especially is suitable and has the added advantage of being termite proof," MacLean explained.

For over an hour the plans were discussed, and it soon became evident that the first difficulty to be overcome was that of finding someone who would design a suitable structure, a building large enough to accommodate the congregation and at the same time simple enough to be built without technical supervision.

Finally Robinson, who had been silent for some moments, broke into the conversation,

"I have an idea, which sounds foolish, perhaps, and yet I don't see why it shouldn't work. I'll bridge-build your church for you. I won't guarantee a beautiful church. Probably an architect would throw up his hands in despair at anything I build, but I can put up walls and design roof trusses, just as I would plan a bridge span that, given the velocity of your highest winds, nothing will ever blow down."

"That suits me perfectly," said MacLean quietly. "In fact, I think I would much rather have it that way."

At this point Rockwell looked at his watch. "If we are going to get to that meeting, we shall have to leave soon."

Robinson and MacLean rose with him, and followed out to the hallway. As Robinson was helping MacLean with his coat, he said,

"I would like you to meet my son John. I have just been thinking . . ." He walked to the front door and stood there, his hand on the doorknob.

"You know," he continued, "it is going to be quite a job to put up a building of this kind without previous experience. John has done a great deal of this kind of thing. He could do it beautifully. Besides that, I think it would do him good to see a bit of applied Christianity, to see what the Gospel is doing in a non-Christian country. Of course he doesn't even know yet what we are planning to do. But it would be a wonderful thing if he were willing to go out there later on to help you. Will you pray with me for John?"

The horn of the waiting car outside announced the arrival of Rockwell. MacLean looked up at the big man beside him.

"I'll pray for him," he promised, as the two men passed through the door into the sunshine.

## II

Easter came late in April that year. MacDonald Robinson and his son John planned a trip to Virginia at that time to attend to the personal effects left there by Ida Robinson. The little college town of Exton lay directly on their route south, so Robinson arranged to drop in on the MacLeans with the twofold purpose of introducing John to the missionaries and of discussing plans for the church. A little luncheon was prepared by Catherine MacLean, who attempted to create an African atmosphere by selecting and preparing foods commonly used in their home in Bafia.

The MacLeans eagerly awaited the Robinsons and shortly

after eleven o'clock the expected knock announced their arrival.

"This is John," Robinson stated simply, in introduction.

As MacLean grasped the proffered hand and gazed into the eyes of the young professor of engineering, he sensed an able personality. There was every evidence of character, linked with an inquisitive mind that would have to be convinced before credence would be given anything. There would probably be no appeal to emotion in this well-ordered mathematical life. Any impression would have to be made by well-substantiated facts.

The men drew up their chairs beside a little table. Before MacDonald Robinson was seated he had unrolled several blueprints which he proceeded to spread out before them.

"Here are some general ground plans which I have drawn up tentatively," he explained. "As I said to you before, I know nothing about church architecture, so am at a loss where to begin. What I have done is to try to seat a thousand people and then build four walls around them in as compact and yet as comfortable a way as possible. I have a couple of magazines on church architecture that I looked up in our company's library, and they have helped a lot. For instance, this one."

He drew several magazines out of his brief case and chose one with an article which looked very complicated to the uninitiated missionary, but under the skillful explanation of the builder the different lines and angles soon took on meaning.

"I wouldn't follow these instructions too closely," MacLean said laughingly. "The Africans can crowd together in an astonishing way, and many of them have few clothes, if any. Many of them are unused to sitting on anything but logs and low raffia-frond beds, so I would suggest you give a liberal allowance for the possibility of very close sitting."

The older Robinson and MacLean were soon engrossed in a lively discussion of the seating arrangements and general outline of the building. John sat beside them, a little aloof, toying with a pencil which he had picked off the table and saying very little. Mrs. MacLean busied herself with the African lunch, and occasionally was asked for some opinion or suggestion on the problem under discussion.

Lunch provided an interlude in the study of the plans, but the discussion centered around acoustics of churches and amphitheatres.

"After all is said and done," Robinson concluded as he folded his napkin, "there is no one, not even the best of architects, who can prophesy just what the acoustics of a building will be before it is completed. There are artificial devices sometimes used to help destroy or deaden echo. Since starting these plans I have spent several hours going over our little church in Baynton as a pattern for the Bafia building."

"That's interesting," MacLean interjected; "I have been doing the same thing. For instance, there is the large college chapel here that intrigues me. It holds well over a thousand people, perhaps twice that many, but the preacher can be heard distinctly all over the building."

"Could we go over now and see it?" Robinson broke in.

"Why not? Let's go at once," MacLean replied, glad of an opportunity to offer John something other than the plans for the African church which seemed to be of little interest to him.

As the three men walked through the beautiful campus of Exton College, MacLean explained the purpose of the different buildings and recounted the many traditions that spoke out from every corner.

The chapel was open, a beautiful new Gothic masterpiece of marble and stone. The men went in reverently and spoke

to a caretaker who was sweeping the floor. He offered no objection to their walking around the building, examining every nook and cranny. MacLean even got up in the elaborately carved pulpit and started to speak, while the older Robinson paced off distances in the long narrow nave of the church, taking up his position at different points to listen. All the time John walked about, examining the wood carving of the choir and pulpit, apparently indifferent to this enthusiasm of the other two men.

There was little time after they got back to the apartment to discuss the plans any further. The Robinsons wanted to get on their way to Virginia.

"Before I leave I must find out something more about the available wood you will be able to furnish for the roof structure," Robinson remarked, as he started to fold up his papers. "You said something about having a sufficient supply of hard wood near you for this purpose?"

"Yes indeed," replied MacLean, his mind taking him back to the forest patches about the station of Bafia. There came a flashing doubt that, perhaps, he should not be too optimistic. A lot of the best timber had been used for the school-houses. "At least, I think there will be enough," he continued, "but you will have to give me plenty of time to get it cut as it must all be sawed by hand. There will be no machinery to help us."

"Could you describe the wood? How strong is it? Is it easily worked?" The questions popped out in quick succession.

"It is a hard, brown mahogany, tough and fibrous, but easily worked when it is still green. Once dried and seasoned it becomes brittle and very hard."

"Do you mean to say you will build roof trusses of mahogany?" broke in John Robinson, suddenly evincing the first real interest in the proceedings.

"You've struck a vulnerable spot there!" exclaimed his father to MacLean; "you ought to see John's tools! He has a precious set of carpenter's tools that no one else is allowed to touch. You see his hobby is puttering around with cabinet making, and I must say, he turns out some fine pieces of work."

The first smile of the day flitted across John's face.

"I wouldn't mind having some of that wood right now," he admitted.

"Do you really want some?" MacLean asked, leaning across the table.

"I certainly do, if it is available," John replied.

"Well, that's easily attended to," MacLean went on, enthusiastically. "The last time we came home from Africa we brought a lot of curios in boxes made of unfinished planks of two or three kinds of mahogany, including the kind we shall be using on the roof trusses. It's up with my wife's folks near New York, and you are welcome to it all if you have any way of getting it to your workshop."

"Would you really? You're sure you don't want it?" came the enthusiastic rejoinder. "That would be great; it's just what I've been looking for. And then, too, we could test out the strength of the wood at the laboratory. It will probably be heavy enough for your purposes. But I'm afraid, Dad," he went on, "that your estimates for those pilasters on the walls will hardly do if the trusses are to be made of this heavy wood. You were counting on pine, or some other light wood."

He hitched up his chair to the table and started in on a lengthy criticism of the morning's discussion, pointing out to his father some errors in estimates, suggesting improvements on the plans, and contributing from his store of practical experience in construction many ideas for the building.

His father looked at him quizzically, nodding his head in agreement. MacLean listened in amazement. Here was the

young man who, to all intents and purposes, had been utterly bored by the whole procedure, proving that he had followed every step of the discussion and had noted every detail.

The blueprints were spread out once more, time was forgotten, pages of estimates and figures flashed from John's nimble pencil. The number of bricks, the amount of cement, sand, tile, everything seemed to be a wellspring of information bubbling up from a limitless source.

But time was rushing on, and although the three men would gladly have continued the discussion on into the night, they finally rose and began gathering up the papers. Then it happened, ———

"You know, Dad," John said, "I wish I could go out and help Mr. MacLean with this building. That roof is going to be no joke. Maybe I could spend a summer doing this."

MacLean hardly dared look at MacDonald Robinson. He knew his eyes were fastened on him, but there was a burning sensation about his own that made it difficult to face the older man. It came time to shake hands again, in farewell this time. John's grasp was firm, cordial, enthusiastic. As MacLean took the hand of the father their eyes met, inevitably. The missionary half expected to see them tear-filled in gratitude, but they were not. A radiating, confident joy shone there instead that seemed to say, "We always get what we ask for, don't we?"

### III

An automobile soared up a hundred feet in the air and arched down perilously close to MacLean, where he stood with MacDonald Robinson at the ship's rail. When the loading crane had deposited one car in the hold, it swung back down to the dock for another and another and another.

Out over the river and the harbor the Manhattan haze

hung thick and low, as if to cut off all the rest of the world from what was happening at the liner's pier. The two men leaned with their elbows on the rail, looking down in silence at the milling, scurrying hundreds of people below them. Above the constant, muffled din of many voices, of heels on wood, and of orders shouted to shuffling longshoremen, the imperious honk of taxi horns echoed through the hollow barn of the pier, to be answered by the weary screech of a crane. Nets full of trunks were swung onto the deck, nets full of sacks of flour dropped into the hold. People were swarming up the gang-planks: people with coats, people with orchids, people with nurses, people with children, people with friends who came aboard to bid them good-bye and went back down the gang-planks bumping into other people's friends.

"Let's move over to the other side," said Robinson at last with a detached look on his face, which showed that his thoughts were no part of the business. From the other rail of the vessel they looked down on a family of tugboats coughing up their black fumes and jockeying for positions beside the vast hulk of the liner.

"Before I have to leave the ship," the older man began in the comparative quiet of their new position, "there are two things I want to tell you, because I think they will be of interest—and perhaps help—to you as you sail." Allan looked up at his friend as a signal of his readiness to hear, and the engineer went on, "You remember that the last time I saw you, John and I were headed for Virginia to get some of his mother's things that were left there?"

"Yes," answered MacLean, "I remember thinking what a fine thing it was for both of you that you could make the trip together."

Robinson looked out into the river in silence for a moment as a noisy tug tried to toot its little brother out of the way.

Then he continued, "Before we left I had made up my mind I was going to tell John what I had done with the money."

"Do you mean he didn't know you had given the money for the church when you were at our house?" MacLean asked.

"That's right. I had never dared tell him. Mr. Rockwell may have told you that John was a second beneficiary of the two insurance policies. Before I could get their cash value he had to sign a waiver of all claim to them."

"I remember something being said about that," MacLean responded.

"Well," Robinson went on, "I knew John had little interest in foreign missions, if he was not definitely opposed to them. So I managed to get his signature by assuring him that a friend whose judgment he respected approved of my plans.

"But I could not keep it to myself indefinitely when I have been so absorbed in it all; so as we were to have this long trip together, I determined to tell him. Frankly I was afraid he would blow up and lose all interest in the building, but I was ready to take that if it came."

"And did it?" asked the younger man eagerly.

"No," Robinson said, "and it is another strange evidence that there is a mind in all this far beyond our own. When I told John what I had done with the money, he was silent for a moment watching the road as we drove along, and then he said, 'Hm! . . . Hm! . . . That's a curious thing. Do you remember the time seven years ago when I was still a student and had a job for the summer on the big dam out in Colorado?'

"I recalled it, of course, and then he continued, 'Well, Dad, I was terribly restless and dissatisfied that summer. And along in the middle of it there was a period of several days when for some reason—I could never figure out why—I had a strange desire to go to Africa some time and put up a building.'"

"Well, . . ." Allan began but stopped.

"I was so dumbfounded, I was speechless," Robinson continued. "And before I had anything to say, John added, 'And now I'm going to do it.'"

"You mean he's definitely planning to come out and help?" MacLean asked eagerly.

"Yes, indeed. He thinks he could go out there and put the roof up for you in six weeks, and get back again between school years."

"That's too good to be true," was all MacLean found to say.

MacDonald Robinson turned to his young friend and asked him, "Do you need more evidence that it is all God's doing and somehow beyond us?"

MacLean shook his head, but asked in surprise, "Why? What else is there?" as if he were ready to hear almost anything.

"Among Ida's things that we brought back from Virginia," Robinson said, "was the Bible she used every day. I was looking at it the other night and found an interesting thing. Nobody knew how she suffered . . . and she seemed to find great comfort in her reading. She had a habit of writing on the blank pages at the back of her Bible the references of passages that had meant a lot to her."

As he paused for a moment, there came a shattering blast of the ship's whistle warning all guests to get off. Quickly he went on, "I noticed that the last two references recorded were very recent. Up to within three days of her death her handwriting was perfectly normal and steady. I received a letter from her the Saturday before she died which was quite as usual. But these two references were in a cramped and labored hand, as if written with the most extreme difficulty. And what do you suppose they were?"

MacLean waited to hear.

"The first referred to that place in II Corinthians 12 where Paul says he had a thorn in the flesh, and three times he begged the Lord to take it away, but the Lord answered him: 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness.' And Paul adds: 'Wherefore I take pleasure in weakness, in injuries, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.'" Robinson added, "How strong Ida has become through her suffering and even her death. . . . She's . . . She's . . . building a church now."

There was nothing Allan could say.

"And the last reference," Robinson went on enthusiastically, "Was in I Chronicles 29, the prayer of King David for the building of the temple and for his son to have the heart to build it."

MacLean's eyes were wide with astonishment and he was almost too amazed to move across the deck with his friend. As the gang-planks were about to be taken down, they had time for only the briefest exchange of farewells before the engineer hurried down to the pier.

Catherine MacLean's family were already below them waving, and Allan found himself beside his wife and daughter as the ship slid out into the channel.

When the last handkerchief could be seen no longer, when the dim New York skyline was gradually lost in the haze, and Ellen had run off with suddenly acquired friends, Catherine wanted to know why her husband was so preoccupied.

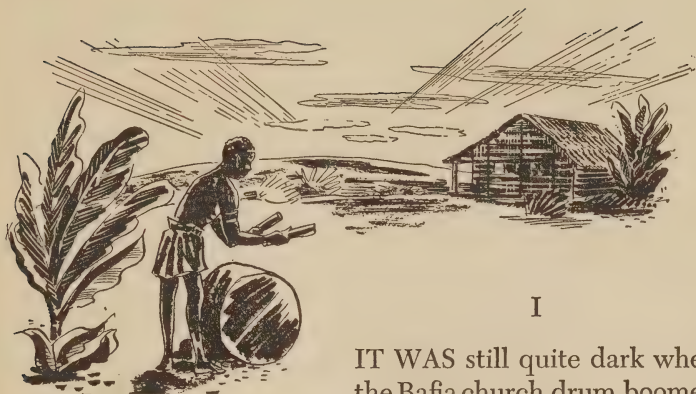
"What's happened to you?" she asked bluntly.

"I can't quite grasp it all," he mused, without really saying it to her. Then turning, "Meet me up in the bow. I'm going below for a minute. I've got something to tell you."

With a Bible open before them, facing out into the sea, he repeated what Robinson had told him and then read from David's prayer in I Chronicles 29:

“Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. . . . But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build Thee an house for Thine holy name cometh of Thine hand, and is all Thine own. . . . O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of thy people, and prepare their heart unto Thee; and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.”

MacLean closed the book, and nothing was said. In silence they looked out into the great spaces, unable to see where they were going but knowing that the course was set.



## I

IT WAS still quite dark when the Bafia church drum boomed forth its Sunday morning summons. Deep-throated, vibrant under the powerful beat of an accomplished drummer, the hollowed log started reverberations that echoed for miles around the station on the hilltop. A dance rhythm changed to a call, the call gave way to an inventive beat born in the mind of the drummer as he pounded away, but through it all came the periodic summons to worship—"This is God's day! This is God's day! Everybody come! Everybody come—come—come!" For a full fifteen minutes the drumming continued, making one wonder at the persistence and fortitude of the drummer. It finished finally, with the customary staccato single beat on the high-toned lip of the drum—"Come—Come—Come!"

To MacLean, lying in bed under the mosquito net, the drumming was as sweet a sound as any symphony could have been. Many a time he had been annoyed by this ceaseless pounding, and often he had remonstrated with these enthusiastic African musicians who always insisted in prolonging the call. Often the constant hammering had been an

agony of syncopation upon his throbbing head, racked with malarial fever. But to-day, the first morning at Bafia after his return from furlough, the drumming was a welcome prelude to what promised to be a great day in the life of the African Christians.

He lay there waiting for the sounds which inevitably followed the drum beat. The young boy who cooked for the MacLeans would soon be in the woodshed chopping the kindling for the kitchen stove. Then would come the rattle of kettles in the kitchen. When the tempting aroma of coffee reached the bedroom it would be time to get up. There had been days when it was an effort to force an aching body out of bed to face a new day of responsibility and endless "palavering." Today a strange excitement made lying in bed an impossibility. He rose and started to shave. Not a soul at Bafia had heard the good news of the answer to their faithful prayers. What a day it was to be! MacLean grinned at his soap-lathered face in the mirror, still dim and indistinct in the light of early morning. He imagined the thrill of surprise, the enthusiastic expressions of thankfulness that would sweep over the congregation that morning when he made the announcement.

As the hour for the morning worship approached, the MacLeans walked down the road that led from their little bark house on the hill to the huge dilapidated barn that for years had served as the house of God. On the way a group of chattering, grinning children joined them. The usual morning Sunday school had been disbanded that day to join in the service of welcome for the two people who had returned safely from that unknown country "across the river of salt." Little bare bodies, some still wet from a morning dip in the river, not one of them boasting of more Sunday finery than khaki shorts or little cotton dresses, they laughed and giggled

as they fought for the privilege of holding one of the missionaries by the hand.

"Look! They both have new shoes!" exclaimed one little fellow pattering along in the dusty road, gazing admiringly at the simple white tennis shoes worn by the white man and his wife.

"Eke," another child ventured, "they have rubber bottoms to them. I know 'cause my uncle has that kind, too."

"Don't be stupid," reprimanded a haughty little girl, wearing a clean but terribly tattered remnant of a dress. Her dignity was heightened by the fact that she held Catherine's hand. "White people have many shoes. Do you know anything!" Her look of disdain changed to a shy little smile up at the missionary as if seeking commendation for her rebuke to a rude observation.

The little party grew to sizable proportions, and was finally merged with the quiet, expectant throng that stood outside the building. It was with difficulty that MacLean was able to force his way through the crowd of old friends who pressed forward. Hands stretched forth to clasp his, calloused hands, hard as knotted wood, soft velvety hands of the privileged few who did not have to work in gardens, but all with a warm clasp of friendship that spoke louder than words.

At a glance MacLean's eyes took in the woefully neglected state of the building. The walls were mere shreds of bark hanging from strips of bamboo that had once held stout pieces firmly and in order. Some of the huge posts supporting the roof had rotted at the base and were held up only by the cross braces that kept them in place. The roof of palm thatch was the worst of all. Great holes gaped raggedly at the blue sky. He could see that attempts had been made to patch the worst places, but the repairs had been of little effect. The rains had gouged deep hollows in the once even clay surface of the floor, leaving muddy puddles that grew green slime

around the edges. It was a desolate, evil-smelling prospect; even the pulpit platform slanted at a dangerous angle as the supporting posts sagged, making it almost unsafe.

As the last wriggling bodies of the children squeezed into the already crowded front benches, an expectant hush fell on the congregation of over a thousand souls who had come to welcome the missionaries. Pastor Mvondo and MacLean mounted the rickety platform and the congregation rose as Mvondo lifted his arms. From a thousand throats there arose, strong and clear,

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow . . . . .”

A lump rose in MacLean's throat as he glanced about the shiny expectant faces of the throng before him. Woolly heads bowed in reverence as Mvondo led in the invocation and prayer of thanks to God for His mercy and kindness in uniting all once again.

The service proceeded, led by the African pastor, and soon the time for the sermon arrived. It was with difficulty that MacLean could find words to express the feelings that welled up in his heart as he faced all these sincere and loyal friends. Soon however, he forgot himself as he began the story that was bursting to be told. Words flowed out, describing the condition of the Church at home and his inability to ask for the money to build the new Bafia sanctuary they had been praying for. Then came the climax,—the letter from Mvondo assuring him of the faithful prayers of the African Christians, followed two days later by the news from Baynton. He repeated all that MacDonald Robinson had told him the day he left New York. He paused. There the people sat, impassive, expectant, as if they were awaiting some sequel, some continuation of the story.

“And so, we have the necessary wealth to build God a house. To Him be all the praise and glory!” he concluded lamely, hesitatingly.

He sat down, dazed, disappointed, a numbness all over his body and soul. To have the expectancy of weeks, the whole plan for the surprising and thrilling announcement, all so vividly portrayed in his own mind, meet with this utter lack of appreciation staggered him. The effect came as a deadening shock. A feeling almost of resentment flowed over him. Did they not realize the wonder of this amazing story, this miracle of answered prayer that had been recounted to them? It was heart-sickening.

He rose and pronounced the benediction. The congregation began to stream out. The whispered murmurs of the people grew into a hum of conversation. MacLean walked down from the pulpit and a crowd gathered around him to shake his hand and welcome him back. Still no word of thanks, no expression of joy was offered by any one. He forced a smile on his face and tried to cover the ache within his heart.

The church was soon almost empty. Little groups straggled off into the paths and lanes that led through the grass to their huts. Old Nyung, the elder, and the rest of the church leaders were all that remained. They sat on the front benches, talking quietly among themselves, waiting for MacLean to join them.

He walked slowly toward them, after having dismissed the last of the congregation, and sat down on a low board beside the little group, grasping one knee in his folded hands. Nyung, always the spokesman, arose.

"Well, Monti," he began, "when do we start the building?"

MacLean's foot came down to the ground with a thud, his mouth dropped open.

"What are you talking about? There must be many beginnings and clearing of many paths before we build," he replied almost impatiently.

"We have already cleared many paths," Nyung smilingly

replied. An enthusiastic chorus of assent followed this statement.

"We have tried to have everything ready," Nyung went on. "The towns and villages have all tied with promises that they will come when the drum calls them to work. Some will make brick, some will carry firewood, some with their heads will carry loads and do whatever you command. Men, women, children, all are ready for this thing, so I say again, when do we start?"

MacLean looked at the eager faces before him in amazement.

"But how could you do this? I told you not to expect the giving of this wealth for the church."

Nyung looked understandingly over his shoulder at Mvondo, who had remained silent during the conversation, then turned to the missionary and said simply,

"Did we not ask Father God for this thing?"

## II

Sunday was over.

Two men stood in the doorway of the ramshackle church, just where they had stood once before. A black man and a white man, one born to an African heritage, the other of Scottish stock, yet through the workings of a kind Providence, sharing much in common, united in purpose and faith.

The school quadrangle had been occupied almost a year now. The dormitories were filled to overflowing. White smoke drifted from the kitchen chimney, eloquent testimony of the glowing fire beneath the huge iron pot that bubbled with the evening meal of corn mush. Eighty hungry mouths were waiting to be fed, eighty black bodies lolled about in the grass, or sat on beds within the building waiting for the summons to the table. A few of the boys were reading, more

lay around listening to the account of some juvenile exploit. Peals of laughter floated up the terrace to the two silent men standing in the church.

There came the clanging of a bell and a sudden rush of bare feet, the jostling of bodies, then silence. In the quiet of the twilight hour there came distinctly the words of thanks offered by the head boy, a scraping of benches, then the clatter of aluminum spoons on enamel plates.

"Do you remember, Mvondo, that it was on just such an evening right here in this place that the idea was born?" the white man asked.

"I was thinking that very thing," Mvondo replied, looking over the roof of the buildings below to the jungle trees beyond, now tipped with purple as night rushed down upon them. "How very good God has been to us!"

He turned to survey the gloomy interior of the church. The hens were again seeking their pulpit roost. Some were already perched for the night, others eyed the distance from floor to roost as if calculating the effort needed to fly to a place of security. Two ducks had found a nocturnal refuge under the platform and were contentedly settling down for the night. A mangy, flea-bitten dog was already curled up on one of the benches, oblivious to the world about him.

"What kind of a good thing we shall have in this place instead of this rottenness!" he continued exultingly.

"But will the people fulfill these tyings of their promises?" MacLean broke in. "Will they come to work with good hearts and hands to help as we have thought? Think of the days of sweating, of weary backs and aching feet. It must all be done without our pushing with our strength against their unwilling hearts. What shame it would be if we were to finish but half of the building and then they rested, unwilling to go on! The money we have will buy only the tools to work with and the cement to join the bricks."

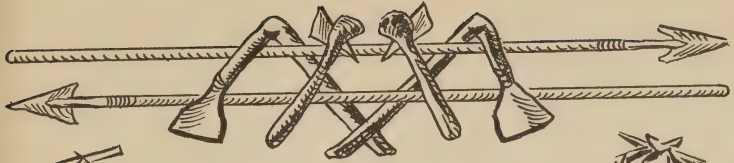
Now that the first thrill, following the sensational announcement of the Africans' faith, had worn off, grave doubts of their ability to fulfill their avowed intention began to assail MacLean. The technical problems to be overcome, with all expert advice and counsel so far away, coupled with the utter lack of skilled labor, was almost terrifying to contemplate. It was too late to turn back. In the enthusiasm of the plans, while they were being prepared in America, it seemed comparatively simple, but now, facing the immediate digging of the foundations, it was overpowering. He was frightened.

Mvondo placed his hand on the white man's shoulder,

"Are you doubting again?" he rebuked kindly. "Is this then a greater problem than the finding of the wealth? When a man goes hunting and he comes upon a fresh trail, is he not helped in his heart to follow on, not doubting in his heart, but ready to follow, follow until he find the animal? We have surely found the trail. Father God has placed us on it. Now we have nothing more to do but follow, step by step, just to follow, follow."

The two men clasped hands in the darkened church. Saying nothing more, but feeling their way past the broken benches, they walked out into the evening.

The stars appear very close to earth in the tropics, and to Allan MacLean that night it seemed as if he could reach out to touch these first brilliant lights of the African evening. He would indeed follow, follow, nothing doubting. Father God would show him the way.



## I



A CURIOUS-LOOKING GROUP of over a hundred men were gathered on the mission porch. Some were stalwart giants whose muscles rippled under satin skins in the sunlight; others, less imposing, were narrow-chested, ill-formed, their flat feet bearing mute witness to the ravages of



jiggers whose painful burrowings in their toes had made walking so difficult and crooked that the arches had finally given way, leaving the feet almost deformed. Some of the men were black, black as burned savanna land in dry season; others were light brown. One stood out from his brothers, a brick red giant, well over six feet in height, with henna colored hair and light blue eyes. All sat around the spacious porch, chewing cola nuts, waiting. One man industriously probed beneath the toe-nail of his neighbor with a splinter of wood, searching for an itching jigger. The sun blazed down, a pitiless, devastating furnace, but the black and brown bodies within the shade of the protecting porch appeared to be cool and impervious to the heat without.

On a crude bamboo bench sat Nyung, Mvondo, and MacLean. The missionary had pencil and paper in hand, a puz-

zled frown between his eyes. Silence fell on the group as he began to speak.

"You men have come because Nyung has called you. He says you are ready to work on this house of God. Before we start working I want to tell you that in this building there will be no wages. But one thing, you are not to be slaves. Your headmen and others have in days past driven you to work against your will. In these days you are obliged to pay for part of your tax by working on the motor roads. This thing I must show you, this work must be gladly given, no one must think in his heart that he is being pushed to work."

A shuffling of bodies on the boards of the porch was the only answer, as the men shifted to more comfortable positions, waiting for what was to follow.

"We must have a regular group of men working every day at making bricks, another group must be chopping and carrying wood for the hole of fire to burn the bricks, others will gather great hills of sand for the cement mixing; water must be fetched, ground cleared, and bricks carried. The people of God will come in from day to day to help in all this, but we must have a great company of workers who will be here every day."

The men nodded their heads. All this they knew, that is why they had come.

"Nyung," said the white man, "you tell them the plan you have in your heart."

An African cannot make an important speech sitting down. An event of this kind, a major speech, demanded full freedom of legs and arms to emphasize and dramatize the whole procedure. Adjusting his cloth, which stretched from waist to knee and was rolled around the hips to form a belt, Nyung cleared his throat and said,

"You all know I am a carpenter, although some men have called me a 'wood-butcher.' We want fifteen young men with

wisdom in their heads and cleverness in their hands to be our apprentices. Amang, Bassoko, and Dong will help me train you. When all this building is finished we shall give each one a complete set of tools and a paper saying you have served your apprenticeship."

Several of the younger men leaned forward. This was what they were waiting for.

"We need masons, too," Nyung went on. "Those who helped in the building of the school town will teach fifteen young men how to build with bricks and the same reward will follow."

"Seke here," he continued, pointing to a huge man with bulging muscles on his shoulders and arms, "will teach twelve men who are strong and willing, to saw planks and beams out of trees."

He paused, looking around to gain dramatic effect. An excited murmur grew into a babel of sound as the men discussed the situation. Silence again as Nyung held up his hand.

"We know what you are saying. When tax time comes, who will pay your head men? Who will keep you from going to prison? With no time to go to market and no time to barter produce and no time to make big gardens, where will the money come from? The money our good brother across the river of salt has given will pay for that, for your tax and the tax of your wife. Moreover, when dry season comes and your wives want a new garden cleared, you will go to your home for that palaver. We shall work in the morning only, from the time of the second call of the frankolin to mid-day. In the afternoon will be much time for garden making."

An enthusiastic response followed as Nyung sat down. The assurance of tax money, the bugbear that haunted them all, was too good to be true. That alone was worth something to these simple folk who in characteristic African generosity

felt it almost a criminal act to hoard anything, even money to pay the annual tax.

It took some time for them to return to any semblance of order. After giving them some time to discuss the situation, MacLean took up the theme.

"Many of your faces I know well, but some of you I do not know. Before cutting this palaver, choosing who should help in each kind of work, I would like to ask how many of you are men of God?"

Over half the number immediately put up their hands. A few hesitatingly confessed that they had been so called at one time or another, but had slipped back into unchristian habits.

"Well," the missionary continued, "our church is being built for the glory of God, and what could give Him greater joy than to find some of His children turning to Him in doing this work? We shall divide the groups in such a way that you who are Christians will be working side by side with those who have no faith in Jesus yet. It will be your work to lead others to Him."

Carefully the different teams were chosen. First the apprentices for the skilled labor were picked, then the laborers, each appointed to some definite task. Each group then gathered to elect a headman who would be responsible for the work and conduct of his group. Before separating Nyung called them to order, some on the porch, some seated on the ground in the shade of the projecting eaves of the bungalow, all with bowed heads as Mvondo offered this simple prayer,

"Our Father God, who in days past made known to Moses just how he should build a tabernacle, and to David how he was to build a temple, show us, Thy children, the way to build this Thy house. Bless these who will do the work, consent in Thy Grace that those who knew not Jesus, our Saviour, will come to find Him in this work. Bless Thy servant across the river of salt who gave of his possessions

to help us, and make us all to do Thy will. In Jesus' name. Amen."

## II

The work had started in earnest. For some weeks now the workmen had thrown themselves into the project with a will and zeal that was encouraging to all concerned. The ground beside the old church had been cleared for the new building. Huge sheds, hastily constructed out of poles and grass, were ready for drying the newly molded bricks. The old brick kiln, dug in the side of a hill, had been enlarged to meet the demands for greater quantities of bricks, and even as Allan MacLean and his wife sat at breakfast the first load of firewood from the forest swung by the house, as twenty men, each with a load of split logs on his head, chanted a response to the rhythmic song of the leader.

Before joining the men digging the foundations at the church site, the missionaries, as was their custom, paused at the breakfast table for a brief worship service in English. There seems to be a deeper significance in prayer when it is offered in one's own language. The MacLeans leaned heavily on these moments of inspiration each day after breakfast.

This morning, however, as MacLean was praying, he became conscious of a growing commotion, an unusual sound, difficult to explain. It grew nearer and nearer, until it became impossible to concentrate on the prayer. He stopped abruptly and looked at his wife.

"What's this? A fight?" Catherine MacLean looked startled.

They rushed to the porch. The mission residence at Bafia was built on a little knoll which commanded a view on three sides for several miles around. The motor road ran through the station grounds, some hundred yards from the residence, and dropped down from the hill in a cut which obscured

all traffic on the road immediately approaching the station. The center of the disturbance seemed to emanate from that hidden point. Workmen could be seen rushing from all directions, shouting and yelling as if pursued by all the evil spirits of the African forest.

With pounding heart Allan waited, undecided whether to rush to the scene of the uproar or to remain on the porch. Perhaps the headman, Botiba, was on a rampage again, coming to try his bluster once more, demanding the school girls of his tribe to replenish his harem, or perhaps a policeman had come to arrest one of the workmen and the others were preventing the arrest.

Suddenly, as if at a given signal, the commotion died down. The silence was almost harder to bear than the shouting. Then roaring through the silence, raising echoes in the forest behind the house, came the first stirring notes of the hymn,

“To the work, to the work . . . . .”

Allan slipped his arm around his wife's waist and she laid her head on his shoulder, a little hysterical, not quite ready to face what they now knew was approaching. There had been many tense moments on that porch when danger and violence had been met. Steeled to meet another such crisis, the words of the hymn had been too much of a contrast. The eyes of both missionaries were somewhat blurred as they saw a host of more than two hundred swing up the road and through the gate posts leading to the mission.

Men and women, boys and girls, clothed and naked, old and young, on they surged without any semblance of order or discipline. Led by Evina Zambo, that warrior of the Christian faith, the first Bulu evangelist to the Bafia tribe, they marched on the missionary home, shouting as they came.

Every one of the participants had some sort of receptacle on his head. Baskets, pans, jars, even cooking pots were balanced miraculously on the tufted hair of their elaborate

coiffures. Each woman carried her short-handled hoe, the African woman's inseparable companion.

They milled about the house, they swarmed over the porch, they danced, they clapped their hands as they shouted out the chorus.

"Kai! Kai! Kai!" screamed Evina. The turmoil died down. Evina took off his sun helmet and mopping his glistening bald head with a gaudy handkerchief, he explained,

"Monti MacLean! Here we are, the people of Dang come to do our work for the day."

A roar of assent and squeals of laughter from the younger women gave unanimous assent to this declaration.

MacLean's mind worked furiously as he bade the people a hearty welcome. He had not asked for this help, the work was not far enough advanced for this proffered labor. Evidently they had become impatient, waiting for a summons to work. It would never do to disappoint them. But what to do? A decision would have to be made at once.

Evina stood before him, his round jovial face literally beaming in the sunlight, proud that his congregation, gathered mostly from the government and commercial center at Dang, some five miles away, had been the first to offer its services.

"We gathered at the time of the morning prayer service," he was explaining, "and we have all brought something to eat, so we can stay as long as you want us. We have walked these eight kilometers singing hymns and praising our Father that we can help in building Him a house."

At this a self-appointed leader struck up a native song. It was one of the well-known Bafia chants, a harmonious chorus joining in the refrain, an antiphony to the question sung by the leader.

Leader. "Oh, why have we come to the white man's town?"

Chorus. "To build God a house, in which to worship Him. To build God a house, we'll do it very well."

Leader. "And now that we're here, what shall we do?"

Chorus. "We'll build God a house . . . . . etc."

Leader. "And why is there joy in our hearts?"

"We build God a house, etc."

All of them were stamping their feet in perfect rhythm, bobbing their heads, clapping their hands, beating on pans, in an enthusiastic demonstration of good will.

It was fortunate for MacLean that he had this interlude to work out a plan for the waiting workers. Glancing over the crowd he saw a few able-bodied men, many young fellows, but most were women, some of them with babies supported on their hips. Gradually several tasks that could well be carried out by willing, inexperienced hands came to mind. When the song continued, seemingly an endless performance, depending only on the inventive genius of the narrator to come to any satisfactory conclusion, MacLean tapped the leader on the shoulder and signalled to him to bring the song to a close. It took some time to stop the dance. Finally all but a few children were quiet enough to listen to the instructions.

"There is work for men, and other kinds for women, in this building," he began. "You men who are strong and know the work of the forest, will follow the trail to the woods and help the men carry wood to the brick hole. The women with hoes will go to the house of brickmaking and there dig earth to make the bricks. You who have vessels that can hold water will go to the spring to get water with which to make the brick-earth into mud for molding. You who have good feet will stamp the mud smooth, all ready to shape into bricks."

The willingness of the people was demonstrated by the alacrity with which they responded to these instructions. They scattered, little groups of friends discussing just which

of the tasks they would prefer and for which they were best fitted. Soon Evina and the white man were left alone.

"This is a great thing you have done today, Evina," MacLean said, sitting down beside him where he leaned against the porch.

"You must forgive me, Monti," the evangelist grinned, "but there was no holding them back. They wanted to be the first that would come in to give their hands to this work. I didn't have time to tell you because I had no idea how many would be coming. I am afraid they will do almost as much damage to the work as they will help, until they learn what to do. If you can tell me just what they should be doing, I'll spend my time seeing that they do it."

Briefly MacLean began to explain the way in which the clay for the brick was dug out of a certain hillside on the station property and how it was watered into the consistency of thick paste and then mixed with sand, the whole process done by the feet of the mixers.

Half way through the explanation a black figure was seen flying toward the hilltop, coming from the general direction of the brick kiln. A tattered cloth fluttered behind the speeding man whose skinny legs were accentuated by white gobs of clay which covered his feet and reached half way up to the knees.

Breathlessly the headman of the regular gang of brick makers waved his arms in the direction of his work, almost unable to say anything at first. "People . . . many people, . . . women, girls . . . spoil all our work . . . won't go away . . . spoil all our nice mud . . . when we sent them away . . . they threw mud . . . much mud . . . threw mud at us. Come quick. . . ."

His panting voice died and a look of disgust began to spread over his face as he saw the men reel with laughter.

"Go on Evina, there's your job!" MacLean managed to say between breaths. The woeful messenger finally broke into a grin himself as the situation was explained to him, and he walked off down the road with Evina.

"Tell 'em to quit throwing mud, Evina," MacLean shouted after the retreating figures, "we need all we can get."

Evina waved his hand in response and struck off through the tall grass to the brick kiln.

And so the work was begun, entirely illogical in concept, with no definite plan possible for the regular assignment of labor, and no promise for the successful completion of the enterprise. But over and above all was faith which met each day's problems as they appeared, not worrying about the difficulties ahead, but bending all strength to the work at hand.

### III

The days, weeks, and months moved on, filled with bustling activity, minor tragedies and major triumphs, days of deep discouragement giving place to hours of hopefulness when it seemed quite possible that the huge church would be built after all.

MacLean thoroughly enjoyed the excitement that prevailed about the station. By turning over most of the evangelistic itineration in the surrounding country to Pastor Mvondo, a task which had taken up much of Allan's time previously, he was able to concentrate on the building program. Occasional trips, visiting the seventy and more outstations or villages where the Mission conducted schools and church services, kept him in contact with the people of the community, but his efficient corps of African workers attended to most of the regional responsibilities for him.

It was no easy task. It was impossible to foresee the many

difficulties that slowed up the work and discouraged the workers.

There was the constant demand for bricks and more bricks . . . bricks were always lacking . . . not enough firewood to finish the burning of a kiln full of newly molded bricks . . . half the bricks unbaked . . . or if there was enough wood, the men appointed to keep the fire going all night would curl up on makeshift beds of leaves and go to sleep, letting the fire go out . . . in the dry season the goats of all the neighboring towns released to wander as they willed, invariably seeking the shade of the dry-sheds, walking all over newly shaped bricks . . . never enough sand to mix with the clay . . . the roof of the kiln blowing off in a storm, half wrecking the dry-sheds as well . . . sloppy work, the men getting careless, poor bricks resulting . . . the molds beginning to wear out, bricks taking on wonderful and fearful shapes . . . full of pebbles, gravel, leaves, dirt . . . but the ever insistent demand for bricks, bricks, and more bricks!

Then the masons and carpenters, with their young apprentices have to be watched . . . how should foundations be laid? . . . how does one start? A beginning is made, four rows of bricks all around, ninety-six feet in length are the walls and forty-six feet wide . . . Consternation! When the builders come back to the starting place they are a whole row of bricks higher . . . shall we build the church then as a spiral? . . . where are the levels? . . . no two alike . . . and no wonder, they have been used as hammers to pound the bricks into place . . . cement left over . . . not enough cement . . . iron casks of cement from England, some spoiled in transit, solid, hard as rocks . . . not enough planes for the carpenters . . . where are the saws? . . . who ever said they could sharpen saws, or set them

for that matter? . . . what's the difference in the cutting edge of a cross-cut saw and a rip saw? . . . every Saturday morning and afternoon a dozen saws to sharpen . . . raw fingers, worn out files, nerves on edge with the everlasting scraping of file on steel . . . lumber, lumber, lumber . . . What are the saw gangs doing?

Long hot walks through the grass to the forest . . . the cooling balm of the jungle shade in the noon-day sun . . . the sound of the saw, twelve-foot saw, sharp biting teeth, cutting into the hard wood . . . swish! draw, swish! draw, swish! . . . the yawning, gaping red pit, red with sawdust, a sweating man beneath the log in the pit, another on top, pushing, pulling, pushing, pulling . . . why don't you get out more boards, more rafters? . . . idiots! they have cut the pieces for the purlins 4 x 4 inches instead of 6 x 4 . . . thought they should be square! one whole log of fine wood ruined . . . then the rainy season . . . pits filled with water, up to a man's waist . . . still they saw . . . wonderful fellows . . . their rippling muscles making patterns on their shiny backs . . . twenty huge truss members needed, 40 feet long, 14 x 10 inches . . . weigh fully a ton . . . how will they ever be dragged out of the forest to the building site?

So the first year slips by . . . the walls are at last taking shape, not quite plumb, the corners not quite square, but it will have to do . . . the brick kiln belching forth fire from its hungry maw . . . seven great hewn beams for the trusses lie bound with vines to the earth to keep them from warping as they season . . . a hundred men pull and strain as they drag out another on log rollers over a trail cut through the jungle . . . the tragic day when one of the sawpits gives way in the rain, tons of the finest wood sink irretrievably in the mud . . . spattered with blood,

perhaps a few tears . . . two months' work lost, trees  
suitable for roof timbers getting scarcer and scarcer . . .  
some discouraged men going home . . . others volun-  
teering . . . some discontented, others demanding  
pay . . . saws to be sharpened, more and more saws,  
and axes too, more than a dozen of them, almost worn useless  
. . . hoes . . . shovels . . . pickaxes . . .  
all needing new handles . . . inch by inch the walls of  
the church grow higher, higher . . . And so the second  
year slips along.





## I

THE WEEKLY MAIL had come early that Wednesday afternoon. An airmail letter announced that John Robinson was leaving in early June on the *S.S. Zarembo* of the America-West Africa Line, sailing directly from New York to Kribi in French Cameroun. MacLean read the letter to his wife, his Bulu Bible and hymn book tucked under his arm, as they walked down to the midweek meeting held for the church members in the immediate vicinity of the station. Walking around the almost completed walls of the new building, they entered the old church, now practically roofless, and sat down on one of the least rotted of the benches. Ribouem, a Bafia man who had had two years' training in the Mission Bible school, conducted the meeting. If the truth had been told, MacLean would have to admit that his mind strayed far from the subject under discussion as the young man proceeded to expound a passage from the New Testament.

The rainy season was just over and the terrible heat of the

pitiless sun was beginning to make itself felt. Work would now be less interrupted. Robinson would be here about the middle of July. Could things be ready for him to put up the roof? Most of the timber was still in the forest. Two great wheels, once used to cart baggage and food between stations before the days of automobiles, had been procured from the mission's industrial school. Would the axle bear the weight of the great truss members? Round and round his weary mind went. Suddenly he came to with a start. Ribouem had finished his exposition and was now making an announcement.

"The masons have told me that there is a scarcity of bricks for the building tomorrow. A new kiln-full of bricks has just been burned, the bricks are still very hot, but if the masons are to have work tomorrow they must have bricks to work with, and so I am asking that each one of you will follow me to the brickyard and carry three loads of brick before we return to our homes. The men can carry large loads, the women as much as they are able, and each child can carry at least one brick. And one more thing. Next week there will be no midweek service. When the drum beats I want every one here to come with a hoe or a machete. Other towns about us have been sending in people to do their share and we who live right here must not be given shame by our neighbors. Next week we are to build a road into the forest where the sawmen have cut large logs for the roof. We shall make a road through the jungle so that these logs can be dragged out to the new church. That's all! Now for the brick!"

There was a rush of bare feet and much shouting as the congregation, catching the spirit of their leader, ran down the winding path through the grass to the kiln. A few men were already at the place struggling to lift the top bricks from the cooling mass with long handled shovels. Everyone soon had a headpiece of grass fashioned and ready on his

head to support a load. The bricks were still so hot that they had to be handled between banana leaves to keep them from burning the hands of those who loaded them onto the headpieces of the carriers. Soon a long snake-like line of carriers could be seen winding its way through the tall grass up to the building site. The missionaries joined in the caravan and afforded much amusement to the Africans as they sought, not very successfully, to balance loads of bricks on their heads.

That night the MacLeans discussed the important news that had just come. It was actually so! John Robinson was on his way to Africa.

"But how in the world can I get all the material ready?" Allan blurted out, as he walked back and forth on the wide porch of the bungalow. "Besides rushing the walls to completion, I'll have to send a whole new gang of men out into the forest getting logs for supports and braces for these trusses John is going to put into place. This letter asks for thirty-six logs, which must be straight and strong, each one the size of a telephone pole. They must be both strong and light. That combination doesn't go in this country; the strong timbers are always heavy."

Catherine looked up from the pile of notebooks, the result of an examination in the school that morning, lying on the table under the gasoline lamp which steamed and sizzled in the hot night. Dark circles, accentuated by the white light of the lantern, ringed her weary eyes. Almost two years had passed now since their return to Bafia and the insidious, enervating something which curses the tropical climate had already stretched out its clammy claws to squeeze the vitality out of the two lone missionaries at Bafia.

Her eyes returned to the endless pages awaiting correction, while her husband continued his nervous walk back and forth, back and forth . . . . .

He paused to listen to the faint drumming of a dance in some village in the distance. Indistinct yet quite audible laughter floated up out of the Stygian darkness about the house. The gasoline lamp cast ladder-like shadows out into the lawn. A bushbok, barking like a dog, was evidently foraging around the school gardens. Nearby a tiny rail was whistling its melancholy dirge, a ghostly sound often attributed to a chameleon by the natives.

MacLean was only half aware of these customary sounds. It was cooling off, a slight breeze stirred the leaves of the hybiscus hedge that ran along the edge of the house. He leaned his throbbing head against a post of the veranda and prayed wearily to himself,

“O God, I don’t see how it can be done, but Thou hast accomplished everything so far, so I leave it with Thee. Only—dear God, keep me going ’til it’s finished, don’t let me break until it’s all over . . . . .”

## II

An automobile trip from Bafia to the coast town of Kribi covers less than three hundred miles, and yet travel over the gravel roads of Cameroun is always an adventure, full of unpredictable delays and unexpected misfortunes. There are no garages on the open highway; one has to be his own mechanic and carry a rolling garage with him. The busy termite makes log bridges, innocent enough to look at, deadly traps to traverse, especially after heavy rains. Any road that is brave enough to wind itself through the hilly jungle fastness invites the inevitable fallen tree which is the most effective way of holding up traffic ever designed. A landslide can be shovelled away. A broken bridge is soon repaired, but a fallen tree, several feet thick, demands hours of concerted effort by sawmen. Sometimes of course, the branches of the

fallen giant hold the trunk high enough off the road so that one can tunnel through the foliage without too much difficulty.

Whenever the news spread about the country that the MacLeans were about to set forth on a journey to the mythical "river of salt," many of the tribesmen about the station begged for a chance to see this wonder of all great wonders of the world. The ocean defies description to one who has never seen it, and to a people who are entirely dependent on imported salt for the daily diet, the unbelievable reality of a vast stretch of water filled with salt was well worth investigating. However, this time the car would not be able to carry passengers, as it was on its way to meet John Robinson and convey him and his baggage to Bafia for the precious six weeks in which the immense roof of the church would have to be built.

The day before the departure for Kribi, the headmen of the various work gangs were called in and given final instructions regarding the preparation of all the necessary material for the roof job. This included timber for the scaffolding as well as the actual hard wood truss material which had been in preparation for the past two years. It was a seemingly hopeless task, and it was with grave misgivings that MacLean tried to impress upon the men the necessity of having everything at the building site when the young builder from across the sea arrived. It was late at night before the last order was given and the last bolt tightened on the old car. Everything that could be done had been attended to and back of it all were the faithful prayers of countless men and women who had been looking forward to this climax of the building program.

Next day the early mist lying in the valleys about the mission station gave promise of a hot cloudless day, and just as the drum was calling the people to morning prayers the

car slipped down the hill into the chilly dampness of the road beyond. It sped over the smooth gravel road, flanked on either side by tall elephant grass which gave way now and then to little patches of green cassava and lighter green corn. As the missionaries rushed past tiny hamlets, the inhabitants were just pulling back the ramshackle bark doors, stretching themselves after the long night spent on hard pole beds. The thatch roofs began to seep smoke, gossamer wisps of white vapor mingling with the mist of the jungle swamps.

The car churned up clouds of dust as it tore along the forest path. The grass lands were soon left behind and real jungle land lay ahead. Coffee and cocoa plantations swept by in rapid succession. Occasionally the swish of a tree and cracking branches evidenced the passage overhead of a tribe of monkeys, and the gray parrots screamed their morning reproaches from the tree tops. There were few stretches of straight road as the highway snaked around huge tree trunks and crossed the black, hidden streams of the mysterious forest that seemed to swallow them on either side. There were places where the narrow road literally led through high, vaulted, cathedral-like archways, in which the hardwood trees of the forest and the mighty kapoks folded their branches overhead and formed a perfect protection from the blazing sun.

It did not take the sun long to find its power that day. Coming out of one of these dark havens of coolness, the car burst into a blaze of dazzling heat. A town fully three miles long spread like a sprawling carpet on either side of the road. Except for a row of oil-palms bordering the automobile highway, there was not a blade of anything green to be seen. Parallel rows of mud dwellings with little black bodies sunning themselves on the dusty barren street, rushed by. At the further end of the town the car had to reduce speed. A

large crowd of people was standing or sitting around a huge shelter under which were lined many tables. On each table was a microscope and an African with his eye fixed to the instrument was busy at work. This was the visiting French doctor and his assistants on their regular round examining everyone in the district for sleeping sickness, that scourge that has all but wiped out several tribes in Cameroun.

The MacLeans stopped the car and walked over to the shelter to pay their respects to the itinerating doctor. His was a lonely life, moving from town to town, month after month, on his errand of mercy, and an occasional visit with another white man was always appreciated. After a short visit the car was on its way again. There was the usual delay at the river crossing, complicated by the fact that three trucks were awaiting a crossing before the mission car arrived. Then Yaounde, the capital of Cameroun, came into sight. After the disorderly, savage beauty of the jungle, this surprisingly green-looking town, with its terraced hills and neat red-tiled white buildings, brought a feeling of rest mingled with a sense of security to the missionaries. It was the first sight of civilization for many a month. The car sped up the hill to the beautifully kept mission compound where lunch was waiting the passing travelers.

A brief hour was spent in the companionship of their associates; then after taking on a fresh supply of gasoline, they began the second stage of the journey. It was hilly at first and the narrow road with its curves was made dangerous, not only by approaching trucks laden with tons of cocoa, but also by the inevitable herds of goats, stray pigs, and countless chickens that seemed to love the freedom provided by the road clearing. The heat by this time was intense and traveling became uncomfortable. The cruel sun took advantage of every clearing and every break in the foliage to beat down on the blistering road, while the wind stirred up

little whirlwinds of dust along the way. The heat did not last long, however, and soon the dampness of the jungle won its nightly victory, as the sun sank lower and lower behind the mighty giants of the forest.

In the late afternoon the dust-covered car swung into the mission station of Elat, spread out like a green lawn beneath the government hill of Ebolowa. To the missionary family from Bafia, a visit to Elat was almost as satisfying as a trip home. Running water and electric lights were something to revel in, and the welcome afforded by the large mission force revived weary spirits and tired bodies.

The following day was a repetition of the past day's experience. Again hilly country made the roads risky, but offered glorious panoramas of jungle beauty, climaxed with the forbidding gorge of Mpikiliki, where a river rushes down off the high inland plateau to the ocean plain. The road wound around this torrential stream which tumbled down in noisy tumult even in dry season. The MacLeans felt the heat of the lowlands rush up to meet the swiftly descending car, and from then on to the ocean, the humid, sticky climate made their clothes cling to the raffia upholstery.

The travelers met the first view of the ocean with a shout of joy. Somehow or other to Allan MacLean the very sight of the sea brought home much closer. This same ocean lapped the shores of America on the other side. The distance was too far to be bridged, but bridges that would outlast those built of steel and stone were being built across that vast expanse.

### III

Any cargo boat plying between West African ports is no respecter of time schedules, and the *Zarembo* was no exception to the rule. It arrived at Kribi almost a week late, cutting off precious days from the time allotted John Robinson in

Africa. To the watchers on the sandy bar at the mouth of the Kribi river, the smudge of smoke on the horizon that 13th of July was a welcome signal.

Gradually the steamer neared the shore. There was something majestic in its approach. Just a lowly cargo boat, it yet seemed important. It grew larger and larger until it seemed to be headed toward destruction on the reef running out from the lighthouse point. Then suddenly an anchor rattled overboard. Slowly the ship swung around parallel with the shore and a small launch could be seen lowered from its davits. The tiny craft was soon speeding toward the bar with a surf-boat in tow. To the restless watchers on shore, so eager to get out to the ship to welcome the long-awaited guest, these formalities dragged on interminably. The launch could not cross the bar but the brave little surf-boat, manned by six practically naked Kru boys, sped to shore, surging up the huge rollers and crashing down the incline on the other side. Soon they were at the bar where they paused for a moment to await an opportune moment, then with a mighty shout that could be heard on shore, they dug their tiny spear-shaped paddles into a huge wave and came sweeping across the shallow barrier in a cloud of spray.

The surf-boat brought a couple of ship's officers with the necessary papers required by quarantine and port authorities. Then at a given signal a whole swarm of surf-boats, propelled by dozens of husky Africans, shot out from the river and the race was on, each boat trying to be the first to reach the ship's side and begin to unload the cargo. In one boat Allan MacLean, Catherine, and their little daughter sat with the mission transport agent, a young missionary from Oregon. It was always an event, this crossing the bar, no matter how many times it had been done before. The stinging salt spray covered the passengers as the boat shot up and up over the

crest and rushed down the other side to the smooth rolling ocean swells beyond.

Near as the ship appeared, it was a full two miles offshore and it took strenuous paddling to reach it. As they approached, the MacLeans anxiously scanned the few passengers who could be seen on the deck and on the bridge. Finally they recognized John Robinson, standing at the end of the bridge, binoculars glued to his eyes. Then he really had come! The iron wall of the ship soon towered above them. A large box-like chair was dangling over them, hanging from one of the ship's derricks. Slowly it was lowered and guided to rest at the bottom of the surf-boat. The missionaries clambered into it and with a jerk they were swung for one awful moment into mid-air, at the mercy of the slowly rolling steamer and the Kru boy controlling the winch that hoisted the chair to the deck.

MacLean and young Robinson met at the head of the companionway that led from the lower deck. As they clasped hands, MacLean thrilled at the realization that another definite step had been taken in the great adventure. Somehow or other the arrival of John Robinson had always been considered an impossibility, or at least something that would never actually happen. MacLean well knew that the success of the venture depended on this man of experience arriving to superintend the most difficult part of the church building. A haunting fear had possessed him ever since the foundations had been laid, a dread that the half-built walls would remain roofless for months, perhaps years, a monument to man's pride and folly. But here again was a demonstration that this building was not a mere dream; it was a plan determined by God Himself, each step of the way pointing to a glorious fulfillment. The arrival of Robinson was just another evidence of His definite purpose.

It did not take long to make the return trip to the shore

and soon the cases of bolts, wire, winches, and tackle began to arrive across the bar, borne in a truly remarkable way by the busy surf-boats that bobbed like corks between the ship and land. A large truck had been hired and waited in readiness for the cargo which was to be shipped without delay to the interior station. Even the customs officials had been warned in advance and were anxious to cooperate in hurrying the precious building material through. The transport agent managed everything in a most efficient way, and before long the mission car was bound for Bafia again with John Robinson safely aboard.

Everything along the way proved interesting to the young man from America. The people on the road, the missionary life in Elat, the strange sights at Yaounde, all fascinated him. And then on the third day—Bafia! MacLean's hands trembled on the wheel of the car as it rushed up the final incline to the mission hill. The new church, with its jagged unfinished brick walls, surrounded with unsightly, makeshift scaffolding, towered above the surrounding palm trees, its very incompleteness seeming to raise the eternal question—could it be done? Would the walls be of sufficient strength to support the roof? Would it be according to specifications? Would John Robinson be disappointed at what he found?

Workmen upon the walls had seen the familiar car approaching and as it drew up in front of the building, a happy, shouting throng blocked the road and engulfed the automobile, everyone insisting on shaking the hand of the long-awaited guest. It was impossible to attempt any formal introductions, in fact that was not necessary. John Robinson was among friends who had known him ever since the building began; he was part of it. The crowd followed the car up the hill to the mission bungalow, all work forgotten. From the veranda of the house, Robinson looked down at his fellow-workers and spoke to them for the first time.

"I can't tell you," he began as MacLean interpreted for him, "how happy I am to be here. I bring you the greetings of my father, who wishes he could be here, too. I want to congratulate you on the work you have done and together we are going to finish the job. I am sorry that I can be here for just a few weeks, but it can't be helped. It means that we are going to work that much harder to get everything done to the roof before I leave."

A shout of assent greeted this short statement and Mvondo, the pastor, stepped forward to make the official welcome to the honored guest.

"These people you see before you, greet you who have made this dangerous voyage across the sea to help us. Nothing we can say will express our warmth of heart which we feel for you and your father. We shall try to show our love with our willing hands and feet. Next Saturday we have prepared a tribal dance, which is the way of this tribe to show great joy, and on Sunday we shall have a service of thanksgiving to Father God for all the blessings with which He has blessed you and us."

Upon this several of the younger men decided to hold an impromptu rehearsal for the forthcoming dance, and it was with some difficulty that the headmen of the different work gangs were able to persuade their men to return to the building site.

Before dinner that evening Robinson and MacLean strolled down to the church to give the visitor a chance to look over the half-finished structure and to examine the material that was lying under a huge shelter of palm-leaf thatch, awaiting his arrival. The workmen had done a good job during MacLean's absence, and practically everything that had been ordered was lying in neat piles under the shelter. He watched the engineer as he climbed nimbly up the frail scaffolding, and nervously assisted him as he took

out a tape measure and began measuring the walls and timbers. Again doubt assailed him. Building with these untrained workmen had not made for accuracy. Evidently Robinson had all the measurements in his head; rarely did he have to refer to the plans which he carried in his hand. Finally the two men climbed to the top of the unfinished gable, towering high above all the surrounding country. They sat silent for a minute looking at the peaceful scene around them. Not until then did Robinson speak.

"What a beautiful place this is going to be!" To one side, sprawling like a grotesque, wounded thing, lay what was left of the old bark church, its roof in tatters, its supports braced and buttressed by countless logs and boards nailed on at every conceivable angle. Beyond that lay the neat school town that had been built three years before, now beautifully terraced, making a pretty pattern of walks and buildings. On the other side the school gardens with rows of ripe corn stretched up the gentle incline to the mission residence.

"Then you think you will be able to carry out the original plans for the roof?" MacLean asked almost breathlessly.

"Why certainly!" was the reply. "None of the bolts in those pilasters on the walls are more than three-eighths of an inch out of place, and the big timbers aren't half as twisted and warped as I had been led to expect."

Robinson probably did not realize what those words meant to the man sitting beside him. Everything below him became blurred for a moment as MacLean clung to the bricks of his dizzy perch. A feeling of intense relief, as if an overpowering burden had been released from his shoulders, flowed over him. Then somehow the litter of bricks and wood scattered around the church, the very wall he was sitting on, took on an indescribable beauty. They suddenly became very precious, as precious as life itself. This huge,

unshapely mass of mortar and brick, he realized for the first time, was a part of him. Part of his life was in it and would be in it as long as the building stood.

"Let's go, John; dinner will be ready."

#### IV

Although tradition insists that the major part of the Bafia tribal dance begin in early afternoon, the musicians arrived at the mission residence that Saturday morning long before the drum announced mid-day. It was to be a great day at Bafia. The whole tribe was ready for the official welcome to John Robinson. Children gathered around the musicians as they prepared their drums for the big event. Several talented young men had small replicas of the ordinary call drum for which they sought suitable resting places on the mission lawn. Others had long hollowed logs, one end of which was covered with a piece of antelope hide. To stretch the skin tighter in order to assure a good tone, little fires were built and the drum-head held close to the flames in the best professional manner.

By noon several hundred people were sitting in groups under shade trees awaiting the arrival of the professional dancers. Finally they came. The drums increased their tempo, the crowd gave way as they swept into view, measuring each foot of ground in a stately rhythmic tread. Over the din made by the drums, a melancholy weird chant rose and fell, voices singing in unison. The clanging of metal bells, each stroke in perfect rhythm, added to the noise and excitement. An expectant hush fell over the crowd, the words of the singers could now be distinguished. They were singing of the one who had crossed the river of salt and come to Bafia. Rank upon rank they filed into the large open space reserved for their dance. First came the men, all over six

feet in height, their glistening bodies and rippling muscles seeming to be controlled by a single impulse. They danced four abreast, serious, impassive, dead in earnest, their feet going through the intricate steps, a sort of silent clog dance. The women followed in exact mimicry with perfect timing and graceful swaying motions of their well-oiled bodies.

The dances lasted half an hour with intermissions of fifteen minutes or so, during which an old woman of the tribe, once a famous dancer herself, swayed around the circle relating in mournful dirge the gossip of the neighborhood. Roars of laughter followed some of her spicy quips and attempts to copy the steps of the dancers. Several little tots followed her around, little mimics of their elders.

One dance in particular fascinated John Robinson as he rushed around the lawn with his moving-picture camera, trying to capture some of the colorful scenes that flitted before him. The narrators were giving an imitation of a motor car, that wonder of the white man that has so changed the lives of the isolated tribes. The dancers had furnished themselves with bamboo imitations of a car crank. At one point in the complicated dance sequence each performer would give a ludicrous imitation of a man furiously cranking a car. As the imaginary engine started, a quiver would vibrate through each dancer, and then as one body the whole group would be off as if bumping along a rough road on imaginary springs. The seriousness of the dancers only heightened the comedy, as they went through the motions time and time again.

There was no limit to their energy, but at last the sun was setting and the time came for the impressive finale. The dancers retired to a grove of guava trees to put on the ceremonial headgear, which was always reserved for the final act. The clanging of a single bell warned everyone that the dancers were ready. Again a great hush fell on the mission

hilltop. A woman's voice, thin and shrill, as mournful as a hyena's howl in the still night, rose and fell in a lonely chant. A gasp of admiration and wonder greeted the first stately dancers as they appeared from the darkening shadows of the grove. Wicker baskets made in many weird shapes and fastened to their heads made each man and woman look like an uncanny, grotesque giant. The baskets were covered with the gay red tail feathers of the gray parrot and were topped with the magnificent plumage of the plantain eater. It seemed miraculous that the unwieldy head pieces could remain upright on the head of each swaying form. It was pure ceremony, a relic of forgotten tradition, formalized in every movement, every step. So impressive was the scene before them that the hushed crowd sat transfixed, staring almost reverently at the actors. The tempo of the drums increased until the dancers were stamping and swaying in a perfect frenzy, their labored breathing and dripping bodies making it seem incredible that human beings could stand another drum beat.

Suddenly it was over. The drums stopped their fearful din. The dancers trooped off, and the crowd began to melt away. To the white people standing there alone it seemed hardly possible that the dance of welcome was over. A few short moments before the place had been a riot of color, a field of flashing activity. It was almost dark now and apart from a few stragglers on the far side of the lawn, they were alone. The Bafia people had given their welcome.

## V

Next day the truck from the beach arrived with the equipment which Robinson had brought for the erection of the roof trusses. Willing hands soon had the odd-looking assortment laid out and ready for action. The men worked with a

zeal that surprised even MacLean, who by this time was not inclined to be surprised at anything. The manner in which Robinson marked out the logs for cutting, taking advantage of every curve and twist of the huge timbers, was evident proof of a master builder at work. It was not long before the four carpenters and their fifteen apprentices were working away with a will. One perspiring young man, pausing to wipe the sweat from his brow, remarked,

"You will have to supply us all with liniment tonight if you expect us to be ready for another day like this tomorrow." His grinning white teeth belied his words, as he manfully grabbed his axe and swung at the hard wood log beside him.

The hoisting apparatus was built before the first week had passed, two huge tripods mounted on log rollers so that they could be moved around to the required stations when lifting the truss members into position. These triangular derricks were the source of much speculation among the Africans. Built on their sides, they filled the space contained by the four walls of the church. How could they possibly be lifted onto their bases? It would take a thousand men to lift them! On each one a steel winch was bolted with many feet of steel cable wound around the drum of the winch, and passing up to the pulleys and blocks at the head. Then logs were buried in the ground to which the cable end was securely fastened. John Robinson kept referring to these anchors for the cable as "dead men." The Africans, quick to catch the significance of this term, buried the logs with mock ceremony and funeral chants. Enthusiasm and good humor marked every state of the operations, and hearty laughter, such as only an African can produce, rang through the enclosure from morning until night. All work was suspended when the moment came to raise the first derrick. To the amazement of everyone, a single man was appointed to turn the crank on the winch which was to do the lifting. Slowly the man began to turn

the handle. Almost imperceptibly the head of the massive tripod lifted itself from the ground. A gasp of amazement went up from the assembled workmen who had taken their positions at a safe distance. Little by little the unwieldy mass of logs and bolts rose higher and higher to the merry rattle of the winch, which was turning rapidly under the strong arms of the man who, by this time, had fully realized that he was the center of attention. A cheer rang out as guy ropes eased the derrick down on its base. Towering high above the walls it was ready for the job of lifting the first mighty truss into place. People passing by on the motor road in front of the building stopped to gaze at this giant, which was appropriately termed "mantis," since its general shape reminded them of that insect. A whole new vocabulary was invented to designate the many building appliances which Robinson had brought. The pulleys and blocks were immediately termed "tortoise"; the monkey wrench was simply "monkey"; the iron ring-washers used on the bolts were dubbed "ten centime pieces," as French West African pieces of that denomination were so shaped; the winches, appropriately enough, they called "thousand men."

The men crushing broken brick to form a foundation for the cement floor of the church were discovered one day wielding the large wooden pestles in perfect rhythm, twisting their bodies the while through the intricate contortions of a native dance. They were imitating the government road makers who lighten their arduous tasks by dancing while they pound the gravel into the road surface. Two men were enthusiastically pounding empty gasoline tins in lieu of drums, making a tremendous din that echoed from the four walls of the roofless building. Above the tinny music the mournful wail of the dance song rose and fell with the rhythm of stamping feet and pounding pestle. It took some time for MacLean to regain his composure as he came upon

this highly undignified conduct, so inappropriate in a place of worship. He walked over to the enthusiastic can-pounders and motioned to the dancers to stop.

"Remember," he cautioned, "this is the house of God. Do you think it right to sing these dance songs in this place of worship?"

Silence followed his question.

"Let us then pound our pestles in rhythm, but try to remember this is a sacred place."

MacLean was on his way to the brick kiln and it was some time before he returned to the building site. As he approached no singing could be heard, neither was there any evidence of pounding by the pestles. On entering the church he found the men sitting along a wall in the welcome shade of the high gable.

"E kel!" he cried, "then, is the work all finished?"

The ringleader, Ziem, covered in tatters of what had once been a gaudy shirt, scratched his scaly thigh and replied,

"Ah Monti, this work needs song and dance, these pounders become too heavy when you just lift them and let them drop, lift them and drop them. A man's heart is heavy and that makes the pounder heavy."

MacLean grinned and walked up to Ziem, taking the pestle from his hand.

"You're a good drummer, Ziem, go beat those tin cans!"

In a second the old fellow was squatted on a log, the empty tin between his knees, and a merry rhythm broke again into the hollow silence of the empty building. With a whoop of joy, the men jumped into their places in a long line of dancers that stretched across the width of the building. Swinging his pestle lustily, MacLean did his best to imitate the contortions and intricate foot work of the men about him, as they howled with glee at his awkward attempts.

At that moment Catherine MacLean walked into the

church to see what the commotion was all about. Her mouth dropped open at the sight of her husband apparently gone mad.

"Don't worry," he shouted above the din, "this is what is meant by making a joyful noise unto the Lord."

The whole floor was finished that one day.

One by one the trusses were shaped under the guidance of John Robinson. One by one each member of a truss was wheeled into position under the waiting derricks. The Africans never ceased wondering at the strength of the winches as they lifted tons of weight with seemingly little effort into their proper positions on the massive pilasters that buttressed the walls. Endless complications, as could be expected, attended the efforts of the builders, but the young engineer seemed to have unlimited resourcefulness as he met each problem with a cool, calculating mind that had foreseen every emergency. He quickly picked up enough of the native jargon to be able to work with the men without the aid of an interpreter. The men loved him and he came to have a respect and high esteem for these humble Africans who had so suddenly become to him friends and co-workers.

The six weeks were almost over and the job he had come to do was nearing completion. The majestic mahogany trusses in orderly array rose high, overshadowing everything but a giant kapok tree that stood close by. Robinson and MacLean were walking up the hill to the mission residence, both weary after the weeks of constant strain and excitement. It had been hard physical labor as well as a constant responsibility in directing the work. Robinson turned around to survey the building from the vantage point of the little hill. The setting sun glowed red on the brick walls and made the roof structure stand out like a huge skeleton against the evening sky. The two men stood there for a moment looking at God's handiwork.

“Do you know,” Robinson finally said, “I cannot think of any more fitting memorial to my mother than this. An expensive memorial in a church or cemetery is something to be looked at for a few years perhaps, but it has no practical value. This will endure for years and years to come, and is going to do the people of this neighborhood an immense amount of good . . . maybe affect the whole life of Bafia.”



## I

ONE DAY some months before John Robinson arrived in Africa, MacLean picked up a copy of a news magazine, then six weeks old, and lay down on a cot for his customary noon-day siesta. It had been a hard morning spent in the drenching rain-soaked forest where the sawmen had been attempting to roll a huge, newly-fallen tree trunk on to a saw-pit. MacLean lay there, aching in every bone in his body, idly scanning the news of events already old but still news in this isolated corner of the world. Under the section devoted to art, he was attracted to a description of the work being carried on by an artist who found stained glass the medium through which he could best express himself. After a summary of famous windows in nationally and internationally known cathedrals, products of this artist's genius, there followed an interesting life history of the man himself, a

deeply religious and consecrated person who had given his life to the Christian service of making windows for churches. Years of research in Europe had led him to some of the secrets of medieval glass making, so long a lost art. Passionately devoted to his art, he manufactured his own glass in his studio with an almost fanatical devotion that led to perfection.

Another dream began to take shape in MacLean's mind as he laid the magazine down and stared at the bark wall before him. A large, gaping hole, six feet in diameter, awaited completion in the east gable of the Bafia church. Plans called for some kind of a window in that opening but nothing definite had been decided. Would it be possible to enlist the help of this great artist? It was absurd to think that a man who was at that very moment engaged in building one of the greatest windows ever planned in America, could be interested in so crude a structure as the Bafia church. And yet this was no ordinary church either. Impossible things had been done before, much larger problems had been solved. Perhaps this too could be worked out.

Jumping up, MacLean hastened to his desk and under the inspiration of the moment wrote to the glassmaker, asking him if he would undertake the task of designing a window for a church in faraway Africa. He explained in detail the wonderful workings of God's providence in making the church possible, and even included a drawing of the wall in which the window would be placed. The envelope was sealed and set aside for the next mail day and the whole incident soon forgotten in the all-engrossing problems at hand.

Weeks later the mail brought a small yellow envelope addressed to the Mission at Bafia. The name of the glass studio was printed on the corner of the envelope. With a thrill of expectation MacLean tore it open and read:

"I was pleased to hear that somebody in far off Africa heard about my stained glass work, and I read the picturesque story about the building of your church with great interest.

"I fear that the cost of my windows would be prohibitive for your church. I have a great number of little bits of glass which fall on the floor when the windows are being made. The glass and the colors are the same as those in the windows, but they are small.

"I would be glad to contribute three or four pounds of this material to your church, if you care to send a representative here and I can be sure they will be used to beautify your church.

"If the natives have ability to perforate wood, something like three ply board, and fasten the pieces of glass to them by tacks or otherwise, they could use them for some jewel effect, which would give a touch of beauty to some part of your church.

"Naturally I would not have much time to spend with anybody whom you might send, and you would have to bear the cost of boxing and sending.

"If I give these pieces to you it will be with the understanding that they will be used, and what is not used, be destroyed. I have my own reason for having this understanding with you.

Very cordially yours,

Samuel Lawrence."

MacLean read the letter to his wife as she drove the car back to the mission station from the postoffice.

"Well, I guess that just about finishes that day dream," he remarked.

"Why not get the glass and see what can be done with it?" Catherine ventured. "He says that you might fix up some arrangement to beautify the church. It might fit into

the little arches at the top of the side windows. That would be rather pretty."

"No, I want a glass window above the pulpit, and we cannot use wood to hold the glass in that position. The heavy rains all come from that direction and it would soon rot. Anyway, what could we do with little pieces of glass? There is a six-foot window to fill. It was mighty good of him to offer the glass. Perhaps we had better get it, now that he has offered it to us."

Arriving at the station MacLean walked down to the church which was standing quiet and deserted after the day's work. Sitting down on a pile of bricks he studied the aperture in the end wall, trying to visualize just the kind of thing that might be constructed with small bits of broken glass to fill the opening. It was of no use, nothing he could think of was at all practical.

His mind began to wander from the problem at hand as his eyes ran over the accumulated pile of building materials that lay scattered around the place, just as the workmen had left them. It was just about this time of night and on this very spot that Mvondo and he had first talked of building a church to the glory of God. How impossible it had all seemed at that time, and here lofty walls rising above the old church were mute evidence of the power of faith. Faith? Yes, faith that overcame all obstacles. Then why not get the glass? It was some of the finest glass in the world. That settled it; he strode back to the house determined to make one more venture without the faintest idea of how the window could ever become a reality.

The one person who came to mind, as far as the representative to send for the glass was concerned, was George Rockwell. A letter was dispatched to him immediately, explaining the situation and urging him to get in touch with the glass maker. At the same time MacLean wrote to friends and

relatives in Scotland and Canada, as well as the United States, asking for all available information on the art of making stained glass windows. He then wrote to the artist himself, accepting his gracious offer and introducing the Rev. George Rockwell, who now lived only a short distance from the studio.

## II

Philadelphia  
April 13, 1937

Dear Mr. Robinson:

Thank you for your kind letter. You have been awfully good to keep in touch with us since we moved down here. I am grateful also for the news about John, and especially about his plans to sail for Africa in June. And now I have a further question to ask about his trip.

About a week ago I had a letter from Allan with a strange request. It seems that he had been reading somewhere about the stained glass work of Samuel Lawrence down here at Lowen Hedge. Learning that he was an active Presbyterian elder, Allan wrote him asking about the possibilities of his doing a rose window for the Bafia church. Lawrence apparently replied that he would be glad to contribute some scraps of glass if Allan would send some one to get them, and the job, by this letter of Allan's, has fallen to me.

The same mail brought a card from Mr. Lawrence saying that the glass was ready and I could come for it any afternoon after 4:30. So last Saturday I went up to Lowen Hedge, had a delightful time with Mr. Lawrence, and came home with the precious box of glass. I have had a wonderful time holding the pieces up to the light for their glorious colors.

Now the question on my mind is the best way to get it to Africa. Allan asked me to say nothing about this whole episode to you until it was over, for fear you would find a way of spending some more money on it. Now however, I have the glass in my possession, and the procuring of it is

completed, and I knew you would be interested. This also has occurred to me: if John is going out to Bafia this summer, would it not be safest to have him take it in his luggage? It does not weigh more than six pounds, I am sure, and would not burden him seriously.

Let me know what you think. If this does not seem feasible, we will find some other way through the Board.

With all good wishes from both of us,

Sincerely yours,

George Rockwell

Baynton

April 15, 1937

Dear Mr. Rockwell:

I am enclosing clipping from a blueprint which shows the general dimensions of the window that Mac has in mind to fill with stained glass, and to which you refer in your letter of April 13th. You will see from this that the area involved (about 20 square feet net) is considerably more than the six pounds you now have will begin to cover. Although I have no idea as to the thickness and weight per square foot of stained glass, I imagine it will take more than six pounds to cover 20 sq. feet. So the first thing for us to settle—so it seems to me—is the question of the quantity required and the cost thereof.

To go back a bit into the history of this window. Mac and I thought that the proper place for it was in the rear wall over the pulpit. The original plan was to leave the space surrounding the cross open. Then after the position of the building had been fixed, Mac called attention to the fact that the pulpit end of the building faced the prevailing winds, which are very strong at times, and it would be very undesirable to leave this big window open. Rather than change the location, however, we decided to fill it with glass.

So now, will you please find out from Mr. Lawrence what he thinks about the quantity, cost, etc., taking into account the waste involved because of irregularities. I can handle the cost, provided it isn't too steep. The question of quantity, sizes of individual pieces, etc., is something Mr. Lawrence can pass on better than I can.

Please excuse this lengthy note.

With all good wishes,

MacDonald Robinson

Lowen Hedge

April 24, 1937

Dear Mr. Rockwell:

I have the extra glass ready and will be glad to have you come for it any time. Would Thursday afternoon about 4:30 be convenient? I hope you may be able to spend a little time with me as I have some further suggestions to pass on to Mr. MacLean about the use of the glass.

Awaiting word from you,

Yours truly,

Samuel Lawrence

Mr. Lawrence led George and Mary Rockwell along the driveway to the unimpressive wooden structure behind his home which served as his studio. As they entered, Rockwell stopped short when his eyes fell upon a familiar design on the floor at his feet. There was the window of the Bafia church drawn out by pencil on the wooden boards, with the cross from top to bottom of the circle, in full size as indicated in the bit of blueprint Robinson had sent.

Samuel Lawrence smiled as his visitors stood looking at the drawing on the floor. The circle was all filled in with pencil markings in odd and irregular forms. "You see," he began, "I've become very much interested in this church and its window." He drew up two folding chairs for the Rockwells.

As he sat down George looked up at the artist. "I knew you would. Everybody does as soon as he begins to find out something about it. It is really quite an amazing story."

"It seems to me to be a wonderful demonstration of the power of God at work," said Lawrence.

"That is the thing," replied Rockwell, "that has impressed all of us from the beginning—the sense of a Mind and Power doing it all almost in spite of us—although I guess it is more with and through MacLean than in spite of him. It has certainly been an undertaking for him."

"It is remarkable to me that he has been able to do this when he is not a professional builder," the older man went on.

"He is a very resourceful and ingenious person," said the minister with a smile. "I don't know how he does it."

"That very resourcefulness of his," continued the artist, "is the reason I am sure he can devise some way of using this glass." He picked up a box from the workbench and displayed its contents.

"My! That looks like a lot," exclaimed Rockwell. "It was good of you to suggest contributing it for the cost of the labor of a man to pick out the pieces. How much is that going to be?"

"Well . . ." A smile came through the sandy beard. "I'll tell you. I rather felt I wanted to have a part in that church, and I wanted to make sure there was enough glass. So I drew out the window here on the floor and filled it with pieces. I couldn't take anything for it. I've had too much fun trying to figure out what he's going to be able to do with it, without any lead."

"Oh, that's awfully generous of . . ." George began, but was unable to finish, because his host was going on.

"I wanted to tell you something more to write Mr. Mac-

Lean about the uses of these colors and their effects in various relations to each other." He launched into a very complete but very simple discussion of colors and their relationships in design, Rockwell making copious notes to send to Allan.

After an hour and a half thanks and farewells were exchanged and the minister picked up the box with its precious contents. "Did you say these scraps were left over from any particular windows or just an accumulation from your work over a long period?"

"Oh, no," came the quick reply. "They practically all are from my window in the north transept of the ----- cathedral."

As George and Mary walked out to their car it all seemed almost too much to grasp. They were carrying glass left over from a window in the ----- cathedral — beautiful glass — to be sent to a little settlement in the heart of the African jungle.

Now that the precious burden of glass was in his possession, the next problem was its shipment to Africa. George Rockwell knew well enough that regular shipments were being made by the Board of Missions to its field in West Africa, but he felt that this glass was too valuable to send to New York by ordinary mail or express. That was just the beginning of a curious series of events that finally led to its disposal at the building site.

It so happened that the president of the Board of Missions attended Rockwell's church one Sunday and on the spur of the moment the minister asked him if he could impose on him the burden for transmission to the Board offices. The president thereupon volunteered to take the parcel as far as his home, where he would turn it over to the treasurer of the Board who lived nearby, to carry it to the offices. The treasurer in due time called for the parcel and took it to his

home. Upon his arrival his wife inquired as to the nature of the parcel.

"I don't know what it is," he replied, "all I know is that it is some valuable thing that is to be sent to MacLean in Africa."

"Well," she replied, "I am afraid whatever the precious thing was, it isn't precious any longer," giving the parcel a little shake. The resulting chinking noise of broken glass cast consternation over the face of the Board executive.

Taking the box in his hands, he gave it another harder shake, holding it to his ear the while. He shook it a little harder, a questioning look in his eyes.

"You'd better throw it out," his wife proposed. "I don't think anything that sounds like that will be of much use in Africa."

The treasurer lowered the box carefully to the table.

"No, I was told to deliver this to the Board for shipment to Africa, and to Africa it will go, broken or not broken. I am sure it hasn't fallen while in my possession."

Next morning the treasurer carried the box gingerly into the office of the shipping department of the Board. Laying it down on the office desk, he gave instructions to the head of the department to have it sent on the next shipment going to Cameroun.

"What's in it?" the young man inquired.

"I'm sure I don't know," the worried treasurer replied, "all I know is that it sounds like broken china."

"Well, we'll have to describe this on the manifest and bills of lading, so we shall have to find out what it is before shipping."

With that the young man proceeded to untie the parcel. To the consternation of both men, the open box revealed nothing but little pieces of broken glass.

The shipping agent looked across at the treasurer, who was staring ruefully at the conglomeration of crystal.

"My advice," the young man was saying, "is to heave all this stuff into the garbage can. If we do send it, what shall we call it? How can it be listed? Broken glass?"

The treasurer shook his head. "No," he insisted, "I was told that this should go to Africa, and to Africa it will go."

For the second time the precious glass was saved from the ignominious fate of the rubbish heap and was eventually dignified by the name "miscellaneous pieces of glass" on the ship's manifest.

### III

Little attention had been given the glass during the sojourn of John Robinson in Bafia. The attention of both men had been given undividedly to the construction of the roof. When the trusses were in place and John had left for home, MacLean turned his attention to the problem of window construction. By this time friends from all over the world, who had been appealed to for help, had sent catalogues and books on the art of stained glass window making. But all these articles took it for granted that every stained glass window must be made of lead. Chunks of lead were available in the local factories or stores. MacLean bought a quantity of this material and by melting it tried to mold the thin H-shaped strips that are customarily used to hold the pieces of glass in place.

It was a discouraging task. The lead was not of the right consistency to lend itself to this particular type of work. It had been made to sell to the Africans for weights on their fish nets. In desperation MacLean wrote to his associates at other stations asking for advice on practical methods for making windows in Africa without benefit of lead. All agreed that some kind of cement construction would be most suit-

able. A mission doctor with much building experience and keen inventive genius, proposed the use of galvanized wire mesh in conjunction with reinforced concrete.

Out of all these suggestions an idea was born. Drawing a full-sized copy of the six-foot circular window, MacLean first planned a design, something that would be of symbolic value to the African mind. A cross would be the center of the window, a six-foot reinforced concrete cross standing out in bold relief from the rest of the surface. The meaning of the cross, he knew, would need no explanation to the Christians of the community and would be a realistic illustration to the non-Christians, many of whom came to every church service. The Church had been at work a short fifteen years at Bafia and the Gospel was still something new in that tribe.

The circular form of the window lent itself readily to ten smaller circles, five on either side of the cross. In these circles, each of which measured nine inches in diameter, he determined to arrange the small pieces of glass in color schemes to symbolize the ten commandments or "tyings," as the Africans called them. This left room for a larger circle to form a background of the cross, a sunburst at the point where the two arms of the cross transected each other, with the blood red glass stretching out into yellow and green and losing itself in deep blue at the circumference.

Almost reverently he set to work. Every night, after the work of the day was done, he wove these patterns of the inexpressibly beautiful glass between two sheets of wire mesh. At its best it was a crude piece of work, but he was comforted at the thought that the glass of the finest windows in Ste. Chapelle and Chartres are rough-looking objects when examined closely. It took months of patient, painstaking effort to get each tiny piece of glass in its proper position, and hours were spent in arranging the jig-saw

puzzle, to take advantage of every precious portion at his disposal.

The next big, almost impossible task, was the pouring of cement around these circles of glass and then fixing them in their relative positions around the massive cross which by this time had been built into the window. Triangular segments of cement, two inches thick, finally came into being, each with a circle of glass imbedded in the wire which ran through the whole segment. With the aid of a teaspoon a mixture of cement and sand was poured carefully into the cracks between the pieces of glass. It was a memorable day when each segment was hoisted by block and tackle into its designated place in the window and securely fastened into place with wire and cement.

It had all been an experiment, a long tedious effort to interpret Christian truth through the beauty of stained glass, but as MacLean stood below and gazed for the first time on the completed window, a surge of thankful praise welled up within him at the beautiful thing that had developed under his hands. The whole story was there. The righteous judgments of God, the eternal law of the ages, transcended and justified by glowing grace shining through the cross with its blood-stained center stretching out into regal blue.

He walked away from the building, humble and thankful, but also with a certain misgiving. It was all well and good for one accustomed to symbolism and the beauty of church architecture, but had he overstepped himself in his zeal, would this be far above the heads of the Africans?

He was still debating this a few days later when a French government doctor happened into the station to visit the mission dispensary. After making the rounds of the tiny establishment, he was invited to tea in the MacLean's home. Over the teacups the conversation drifted around to the new church building, the most impressive structure in the

whole district, even in its unfinished state. MacLean invited the doctor to investigate the work under construction. Together they walked down the short distance to the church and entered the high archway facing the window. The doctor's glance immediately became fixed on the jewel-like circle and he reverently doffed his helmet, walking slowly forward without a word. Halfway he stopped and turned to the missionary.

"Where did that glass come from?" he almost whispered.

"It came from America," MacLean replied.

The man was silent for a while, then said slowly, "I have never seen glass like that outside Chartres Cathedral. It must have been very expensive, I know, for we are still paying for a small imitation of a Chartres window in memory of a brother lost in the Great War."

"It was a gift," came the reply, "from the artist who makes the glass, and it is indeed similar to the Chartres glass, for he has been able to gather many of the secrets of the ancients."

"Ah then, that explains it."

But what would the Africans think of it? The workmen had all been polite and had said it was beautiful, but that might have been said in mere politeness. MacLean's answer came unexpectedly a short time later.

It had been a terribly hot, trying day. Half the roof by this time was completely covered with tiles. The old church was a hopeless wreck, so services were now being held in the new church, part of the congregation sitting under the blue sky, and yet surrounded by the walls of their new edifice. The pulpit and choir stalls were in the process of construction. It began to look like a real sanctuary. The workmen had left for the day and MacLean was sitting on a log with his back to the brick wall close to the main entrance.

Bound up in his own thoughts, he was hardly conscious of two little figures that timidly peeked into the building.

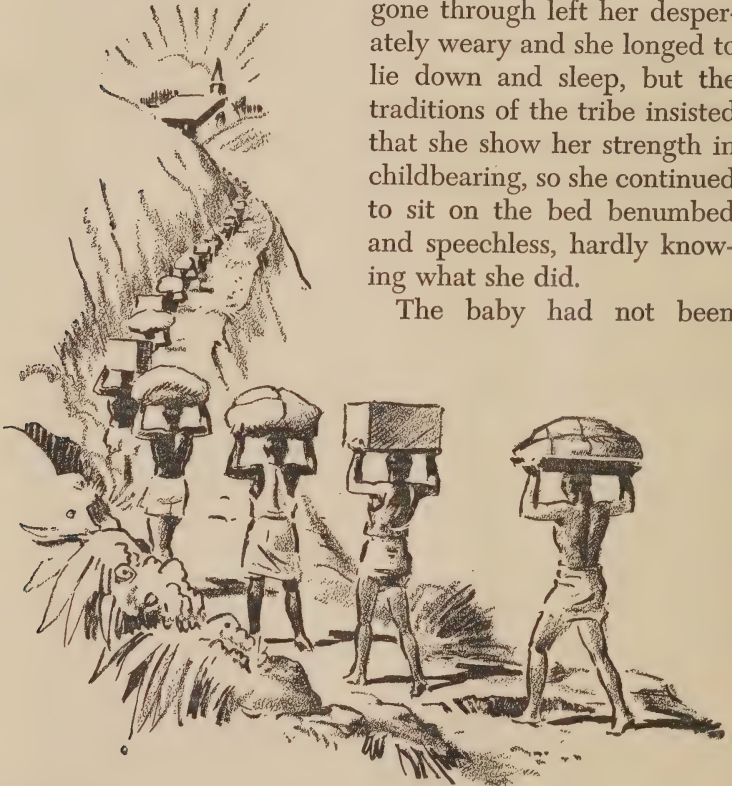
Seeing no one there, the two small girls from the mission school ventured a little farther into the church. Then taking hands and without a word they moved silently up to a bench near the front. Two little tattered figures, their hair sticking out in pigtails, sat awed by the majesty of the still half-built sanctuary. They gazed for a long time at the window, then simultaneously bowed their little heads in reverence and worship. That was all. They slipped out the choir door and were gone.

MacLean sat for a long time, not wanting to leave the place. Another prayer was answered, another doubt forever gone.

## I

A TINY BABY BOY, not six hours old, lay in a filthy rag upon his mother's lap. The mother, herself not fifteen years of age, sat on the crude pole bed staring with listless eyes at the tiny morsel of skin and bones that squirmed feebly in her arms. The ordeal she had just gone through left her desperately weary and she longed to lie down and sleep, but the traditions of the tribe insisted that she show her strength in childbearing, so she continued to sit on the bed benumbed and speechless, hardly knowing what she did.

The baby had not been



washed; that would have killed it, the old midwife said, so instead it had been rubbed with redwood powder until it looked like a blood-soaked little animal. The midwife was weaving a high collar about its neck, deftly intertwining the rough strands of reed that had been taken from the river's bank. It grew so tight the infant almost choked, but the old hag went on with her task until it was completed. This would assure the baby of a strong neck to carry loads and a strong, manly back . . . if it should happen to live that long!

Across the tiny room sat old Nto, the father, naked except for a bark cloth about his loins. No one knew how old Nto was. He was older than anyone else in the village and one of the oldest men in the tribe. He had ruled the tribe from time immemorial, a crafty, cruel despot who had been wise enough to make peace with the German conquerors when they first carved Kamerun out of the African jungle. He gazed with that cunning look in his dark shifting eyes at his newest wife and her offspring. He was still able to have children; perhaps then this one would live. The mother was strong and healthy enough. He might still live to see a son grow up who would follow in his footsteps and take over the authority of the tribe. As for this nephew of his who was gradually assuming control . . . Kam! he was too soft and all wrapped up in this new Tribe of God business, with school foolishness, paper and sticks to fiddle around with, making funny marks all over everything! It just wasn't right! His eyes gleamed with satisfaction. So they thought he was too old!

Bikae, the nephew of his thoughts, loomed in the narrow opening of the hut that served as door, his broad shoulders hardly able to squeeze through the aperture.

"How's the child, father?" he questioned softly.

A grunt was the only reply.

The midwife turned on the young man fiercely, her voice strident and complaining.

"Get out of here, O worthless son of a ne'er-do-well! Thy shadow will bring a curse. Should this son then die too like all the rest?"

"I came to say I am going on a long walk, O father," the nephew continued, ignoring the protestations of the old woman. "Many of us are setting out for Donenkeng, the Mission Hill at Bafia. We shall not try to walk in two days because many women and children of the Tribe of God are going with us, so we must walk slowly. In seven nights I shall be back. A big gathering is being held at the Hill to give God a new house."

He looked pityingly at the slip of a girl, oblivious in her agony to all that was going on.

"Why not lie down, little one?" he ventured, softly.

"Get out of here, you son of a pig, you worthless infant of rottenness," cursed the midwife, brandishing a cutlass that lay near at hand.

Bikae stepped back a pace to avoid being cut, while the old man grinned approvingly at the old woman.

"If that child dies and the mother is buried in the same grave, do not say I brought a curse," Bikae said, without raising his voice. "I told you to send her to the mission hospital where babies are born to live. And now, be left well, I have gone."

He strode off down the hill, the muttering of the old woman his only answer.

. . . . .

Over two hundred miles to the west, the town of Yaneben was seething with excitement. A crowd was gathered before the two-storied brick house of Botiba, paramount chief of the Yambassa tribe. People came running from the long rows of

mud houses that stretched out in all directions from the headman's house.

Botiba himself, resplendent in the khaki uniform of the French government and his face contorted in anger, stood beside the carcass of an emaciated horse that sprawled on the ground, the shaft of an arrow sticking viciously out from between its ribs. A group of his police, dressed in the tattered rags of what had once been gorgeous uniforms of gold braid and khaki, surrounded the headman, and the tribespeople, frightened and cowering, were assembled at a safe distance. On the other side of the dead beast stood a young man in white duck trousers and coat, his bare feet apart, his arms crossed on his chest, a manly figure, not defiant but absolutely fearless.

The headman's voice was rising to a shriek.

"You know you did it, you and your God-people. We have traced the footsteps of the horse to your gardens. You will pay me 1,000 francs for my horse or you will go to prison. Answer me, you . . . you . . ."

The young man spoke slowly, "I have told you, I and my people know nothing of the palaver. It is true your horse has been raiding our gardens and we have chased him away many times, I and the school boys, but I am just an evangelist and teacher here. What authority have I to kill a headman's horse? I am a guest in your town, would a guest do such a thing?"

"Will you pay me then?" shrieked Botiba, "will you?"

"I have not that much money, nor would I pay if I had it. I have done nothing to warrant this fine," came the steady answer.

The headman sprang across the body of the horse with remarkable agility for a man of his age. Forgetting all dignity he drew back his right arm. Smack! Smack! he struck the evangelist on both cheeks, rocking him on his heels. The

police approached threateningly. Still the young man stood with arms folded, silent.

Botiba, a little taken aback with his own outburst, walked off a few paces, then returned and shook his fist in the evangelist's face.

"You will hear from the Government then. I am leaving for the Post in my car and will summon you and your whole school and everybody among the people of God. I'll wipe out all this foolishness from my town. You and your white Father have done nothing but bring trouble to my people, taking the young girls away from our men, taking the boys from their families, killing our animals. You'll get out . . . all of you!"

His voice reached such a pitch that it ended in a strangled whisper. He strode away and the young man walked alone, shunned by all, down the long street toward his little mission compound. Reaching the shelter of his own hut he flung himself down at a table and buried his head in his arms. Great sobs shook his manly frame. Innocent and humiliated, he had suffered the greatest insult any African can endure. He came from a fighting, fearless tribe and he had had to stand there publicly and be shamed. His wife in the little kitchen at the back of the house busied herself at imaginary tasks, fussing around the bundles all ready for the two-day walk to the mission station. Several small school boys squatted about on the dirt floor, looking frightened, picking at their toe-nails, not daring to look at the prostrate figure of their master and friend.

After a few moments the evangelist arose, and going to a pail of water, he poured it over his well-shaped head, and drying himself on a towel, he returned to the kitchen.

"We shall go now," he remarked quietly.

Without a word the boys picked up their assigned bundles, the door was closed, and the little group started off on the

winding trail that led eventually to Donenkeng, the Mission Hill, to attend the assembly of giving God his house.

. . . . .

Some fifty miles north a similar little group, composed of an evangelist, his wife, and some school children, were putting the last binding twines on their loads. The loads had to be made secure to be carried on the heads of the pilgrims who were setting out on the long road to Donenkeng, the Mission Hill. Menge was an evangelist outpost of the Lemande tribe, a beautiful spot set high on a rocky hill. The narrow winding trail down the mountain side was smooth and slippery and beset with rocky pitfalls. Nothing but calloused, bare feet could navigate that descent with a weighty burden on the head of the traveler. Soon all was in readiness and the band set off, singing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving.

In single file they wound down the rocky incline to the grassy plain below. The descent was half accomplished when they came upon a khaki-clad figure on the ascent. A huge black man with pack on his back and a rifle slung across his shoulder blocked the narrow trail. He leaned against the rocky cliff at his side and mopped the perspiration from his steaming brow as the first barefoot boys eased themselves and their burdens past him.

"E ke!" he exclaimed, as the teacher and his wife approached, "what's going on here? Is there a market today, or do you go to a dance?"

"Neither," was the rejoinder, "we are off to attend the giving of the new house to God at Donenkeng."

"Where is Donenkeng?" the soldier persisted, being a stranger from a coast town on official tax business for the Government.

"It is at Bafia, near the Government Post, on the road to Yaounde," explained the evangelist.

"E ke ke ke . . . yes, I remember, it is the big brick building I passed three days ago. I remember I stood there examining that house, I even peeked inside. It was all ngen-ngen, shiny and filled with color. A house of God, you say?"

"Yes, son of a soldier, it is a new house we are all building to give God glory. We have all had a hand in it, taking this long walk to help in the work."

"But I have one question," continued the soldier, shifting his heavy rifle to hang from the strap on the other shoulder. "Where did you people up here in the bush get so much wealth to buy all that brick and cement? It must have cost very much."

"A certain man across the river of salt gave us the wealth, and he sent his son to help in the building palaver," the evangelist explained, eager to be on his way. One cannot be too hasty with soldiers, however, as they have a way of demanding chickens and much food on the way, if one is impolite.

"He must love this place very much, then. When did he live at Bafia?"

"Oh, he didn't live at Bafia, ever. He is a man of God, who wanted to help others hear the Words of God, so he built us this house."

The soldier, used to the ways of the world, a man who had seen action during the fighting in Cameroun in 1915, scratched his head in wonder.

"A thing to be wondered at surely!" he mused. "All that money for people he has never seen or eaten food with! He is truly a man of God."

He shifted his pack and made ready for the tedious climb ahead of him. Turning to the evangelist he said slowly, "If

ever I become a man of God, you can tell your friend from across the river of salt, that it was because he has done this thing, given so much for a tribe he has never seen. Walk well. I have gone.”

. . . . .

Many miles to the south three car-loads of missionaries were preparing for the long trip to Bafia to attend the dedication of the new church. It was the week-end of May 22, 1938. The date had been set to accommodate the oldest one of their number who was completing forty years of missionary endeavor in the colony, and was soon retiring from service. The territory of Bafia had been claimed for Christ in a sort of pincers movement, the emissaries of the Gospel coming in from two directions. One of these invasions had come from the south, and this veteran of many conquests of the Gospel in West Africa had made the first trips over this familiar road on a bicycle.

As he sped along in a modern, comfortable automobile, his mind inevitably conjured up the old days when he had pushed on into unknown areas with nothing but faith and courage to sustain him. On more than one occasion his life had been threatened, over and over again he had dared to walk into a chief's house where instant death had been promised him. It was no wonder the children of the forest had learned to love and respect him, dubbing him with the drum-call name, "Wandering, wandering . . . what are you looking for?" He knew what he had been looking for—the souls of men, the bringing of the news of the Kingdom had always been his quest and his message. Up here at Bafia he well remembered his first service with three women and a couple of children. That was all, and just fifteen years had elapsed. Now a large church was to be dedicated with thousands trooping in from the region to attend the service. What power there was in the Gospel!

In the other cars former pastors of the Bafia church were participating in what amounted to a home-coming celebration. Some of them had been with the work when it was still a struggling feeble movement, beset on all sides by pagan opposition. As the cars approached the station late that Saturday afternoon, groups of travelers, walking along the dusty road with bundles of food-stuffs and clothes on their heads, stepped aside to let the cavalcade rush by. The hill at the station presented the appearance of a huge, gala market day. Swarms of people strolling about or sitting on the grassy lawns around the new church, with their bundles and piles of food beside them, were enjoying this opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones with people from different tribes. Not many years before these same people had been at war with one another, tribe fighting against tribe, not daring to set foot on the other's soil; but here at the completed church, symbol of love and brotherhood which they had united in building, they found Christian fellowship which did away with all the old animosities.

The little bark bungalow on the hilltop was crowded to capacity that night. Besides the missionary guests, two other visitors, the secretary of the American Mission to Lepers and his wife who happened to be visiting Cameroun at that time, helped in the festivity of the occasion.

After everyone had retired to his makeshift night's quarters, MacLean went out to the porch overlooking the rest of the station. He did not feel at all sleepy, even though the past week had been one of hectic confusion in the final attempt to have everything in readiness for the great occasion. As he leaned against the pole supporting the roof, enjoying the cool, soft, evening breeze, he began to realize for the first time that the culmination of three years' effort was at hand. A thrill passed through him, as if he were shaken by malaria. It was not malaria nor was it the chill breeze that

caused him to tremble. It was the sense of glorious fulfillment that thrilled him through and through.

As he stood there he became conscious of a humming noise, an indistinct and yet plainly audible murmur. He went indoors and beckoned to his wife, who was just blowing out the kerosene lantern that hung in the kitchen. Hand in hand they stood together listening. Dozens of little campfires glowed around them, the smell of burning brush told them that the mission houses had proved woefully inadequate to accommodate the crowds of people who had come to Donenkeng. Every now and then a hearty African laugh, high-pitched, infectious, floated up above the murmur of hundreds of voices. MacLean smiled to himself in the dark. The Tribe of God had surely come out in force, promising great things for the morrow. He did not know the half of it!

THE DAY dawned clear and cool, too clear to be promising, as that condition often presaged stormy weather at this time of the year. While the guests were at breakfast, MacLean gathered his force of evangelists and teachers in the church and gave them last-minute instructions as to the program of services. Tickets had been issued to the members of their little congregations so that each person would be assured of a seat at one service. It had been arranged to have the first service at eight o'clock in the morning devoted entirely to children. Two preaching services were to follow, then a communion service for the church members was to conclude the celebration. This loyal corps of workers had been commissioned to act as ushers and helpers in keeping the crowds in order. Such a crowd of people had never been assembled before for a church service, and MacLean was anxious to have everything done decently and in order, a thing not always possible in an African crowd.

Evina Zambo and Mvondo Atyam, MacLean's co-laborers at Bafia, conducted the children's service. It was impossible

to count the squirming, wriggling little bodies that crowded into the new church that morning, but there were well over two thousand. In spite of their cramped quarters, they sang the familiar hymns lustily and listened attentively to the two addresses delivered by Evina and Mvondo. To look down on that sea of young faces, the hope of the future of Africa, was an experience never to be forgotten.

Before the children had had time to leave their seats at the conclusion of their service, the church was filled again with a congregation of adults. It was a riot of color. Everyone had on his very best holiday attire, and as in the case of most Africans, their tastes ran to extremes in color. It was a worshipful and reverent host, however, and there brooded over the building a spirit of holy thanksgiving for God's goodness and grace, as the senior missionary, evidently greatly moved by what he was experiencing, expounded to them the message from God's word.

Then the inevitable happened.

As the service progressed the second congregation had been growing impatient on the outside of the building. All efforts by the evangelists and teachers, who had been assigned to keep order outside, were of no avail. A mighty throng crowded around the doors, pushing and jostling each other in an effort to be the first to enter the church upon the completion of the first service. When the congregation was dismissed, the doors simply would not open.

MacLean, with disastrous results to his white suit, finally squeezed out of a side door and rushed around to the main entrance where his helpers were manfully struggling with the good-natured mob.

"It's no use. We can't do a thing. It would take an army of policemen to push them back," one of the men yelled over the hubbub.

MacLean finally squirmed through to the doorway, a high arched opening with massive doors of mahogany, held together with steel bolts. He shouted to gain the attention of the people. Those near him stopped their shoving for a moment, but beyond them his voice did not carry. With main force he tried to push them back, but it was an impossible task. Looking over the heads of the mob, he was horrified to see the immaculate white of the government officials, who had been invited to the service, gradually being engulfed in the pressing throngs of Africans. What would they think of this demonstration of mob violence at the threshold of a place of worship? He attempted to reach them but was held immovable by the grinning crowd around him, who were as helpless to give him assistance as he was to help himself.

Finally he was able to move the doors a few inches apart to allow several in the interior to push their way out. Gradually the doors were forced open. But only a few inches! Instead of swinging open, the heavy planks were bending outward, the steel bolts bending with them. The doors were literally being bent outward by the pressure from within. He placed himself at the spearhead of the outpouring congregation and the pressure behind finally drove him through the crowd, thus forming a corridor in the mass of humanity, through which people could pass. Over and over again that corridor closed, as the in-going congregation overcame those coming out.

He stood disheveled and embarrassed before his French government guests, making his best excuses for the rowdy reception. The French men and women stood with looks of amusement on their faces.

"Formidable! Really formidable, all this enthusiasm!" exclaimed the Chief of the Region, highest ranking dignitary in the district. The Africans in the immediate neighborhood

of the officials slowly gave way, to MacLean's intense relief, and he soon had a path cleared for them to their seats. Behind them came an onrushing mass of people. It was like a waterfall, tumbling over rocks in a wild tumultuous rush. He could have wept. All his carefully-made plans come to naught! He slumped down on a choir bench, sick at heart.

The veteran missionary, well versed in the psychology of Africans and sensing the disappointment in his young colleague, sat down beside him and threw his arm over MacLean's shoulder.

"Don't you worry about all this, Mac, they're having a grand time. They'll never forget it."

"But what a way to act, on this of all days!" MacLean blurted out.

"Listen," the veteran continued, "I learned long ago to let the African do things in his own way. The first time I shot an elephant, a mob came out and we nearly had a massacre before the meat was finally divided. Two men ended up in our little hospital, and some men bore the marks of that battle for meat all their lives. I decided then and there that the next elephant I shot we would not have a repetition of that bestial and disgraceful scene. I shot another elephant some time after, and I stood guard over the dead beast with my rifle until we had built a little fence around it. Then we butchered it in peace and made neat little piles of meat, each of equal size. Finally we drew lots for the meat so that everyone present got an equal share. On the way home I overheard two men talking. They said they had been greatly disappointed at the procedure, in fact they said they would never go to another elephant feast if a white man had anything to do with it, for it was no fun at all. So my advice is, let them alone; this is their way of doing it and they will remember this service as long as they live."

It was amazing how soon everything was quiet and in

order. The faces fixed in wonder on the stained glass window and the beautiful paneling of the pulpit and choir loft, belied the fact that these same people, a moment before, had composed the wild, unruly mob outside the building. A hush of expectancy and reverence settled over the church, as the choir processional could be heard, faintly at first, but in ever increasing volume as it filed into the sanctuary. The second service had begun.

Many of the people left after the services of the morning. The communicant members of the church, a full thousand strong, awaited the gathering at the Lord's table that was to bring the celebration to a close. By this time lowering clouds had piled up in the east and it had become oppressively hot. The communion service began a little ahead of schedule in order to allow the congregation to depart before the storm broke. It was a beautiful, impressive, and holy occasion. The Spirit of the Lord was upon them. Nothing that was said or might have been said could have heightened the solemnity and child-like reverence of the faithful as they sat with bowed heads before the white-covered table. Many of these men and women had suffered physical persecution for their faith; all of them had given up much of their former lives to be of that chosen congregation.

As the service proceeded the sky became darker and darker and the building within was clouded in an eery light that somehow fitted into the solemnity of the sacrament. The deathlike stillness within accentuated the rumbling of the thunder as it approached.

The congregation rose to sing the final hymn. At that moment a rushing, mighty wind struck the building with the full force of a tropical tornado. Lightning blazed through the murk and a crash of thunder drowned the voices raised in praise. Instinctively MacLean's eyes wandered to the mighty roof trusses, so firmly planted by John Robinson, and

the words of his father, spoken so long ago in the Baynton manse, came back with new significance, "I'll build you a house that no wind will ever be able to blow down." It was as if all the forces of hell were let loose around them, vindictive and full of wrath that righteousness had become so implanted in a place where sin and hate had long prevailed. But it was too late. The mighty building stood firm, a shelter from the stormy blast, a refuge for all within. A mighty surge of triumph nearly choked MacLean as he joined his voice with that of the congregation in the final hymn of triumph and praise.

"My Father I love Thee  
And Jesus Thy Son;  
I love the Holy Spirit  
All Three, but God in One.

Things of this world pass,  
But things of Heaven last;  
They are to me so precious  
For God doth hold them fast."

. . . . .

The storm had long since rolled over. Guests, both black and white, had gone. The steaming vapor seeped up from ground and forest as the MacLeans walked slowly around the school town behind the church. It was all deserted now, everyone had left. In the dusk a white figure approached, coming out of the church building.

"Well, Mvondo," Catherine MacLean said, addressing the approaching African pastor, "it is all over."

"No, Madame, not all over, it is just beginning, this thing of beauty, this holy place of God. Thank God for His great goodness."

## II

There it stands today, a monument to Christian faith and

the power of prayer. The chickens and the goats wander aimlessly around outside, thinking perhaps of their old haven of refuge. The season of torrential rains, when the gutters and drains about the building carry endless rushing streams of water to the valley below, gives place to days of prostrating heat. There follows that peculiar time of "buna," when in spite of cloudless skies and blazing sun, the north wind carries a chill at noonday and bitter cold at night. Lips become parched and skin cracks in the misty, dust-laden air. Tradition has it that the haze comes from the burning of many bones from the buna fish, caught in great numbers at the beginning of the dry season. After all comes the season of burning feet, when even the calloused soles of the African hate to tread the parched red earth. Smoke fills the air later on, as the savanna land is burned black, wafting tiny shreds of charred grass on every heated breath of wind. And through it all the church stands, imposing yet simple in design, the one permanent structure that defies the ravages of termite and tempest.

No visible marker boasts of the heroism, faithfulness, and devotion of the willing workers who suffered the heat of the day and the clammy chill of the rain-drenched forest to produce this house of God. No shiny memorial plate speaks to the inquisitive passer-by of the generosity of a friend who built a bridge to Africa. A simple cement cornerstone faces the highway that winds past the church to the tribal towns in the north. That is all—at least that is all that meets the eye.

There are only one or two persons in the world who realize that there is a modest inscription on this house of God, which tells the story in a word. It is there, carved with reverence and humility in strong cement. It is not there for the careless or inquisitive soul to cast a passing glance and then move on. It hangs between heaven and earth where only God can see. For this is not a building to bring glory to man or to im-

mortalize a noble life or work. It was built to glorify the risen Christ, to offer a place of worship to the people of Bafia and the surrounding tribes. This is as it ought to be.

On that memorable day in the Baynton manse when the plans for the church were first discussed, and MacDonald Robinson had offered to bridge-build the church in Bafia, Allan MacLean, in the first moments of enthusiastic planning, had suggested the idea of taking some sort of memorial plaque to Africa with him.

"Some brief inscription," he suggested to the bridge builder, "dedicating this whole venture to Mrs. Robinson. I think something of the story of her victorious life would be very impressive, and at the same time give to the edifice a meaning that will otherwise be missing."

MacDonald Robinson, with characteristic suddenness, as if finishing once and for all something that was distasteful to him, quietly replied, "No, I would rather not have anything like that on the building."

That finished the discussion for the time being, and it was not mentioned again before MacLean returned to the field.

Months later in a letter Robinson offered a suggestion that met with an immediate response in the mind of the man in Africa.

"You once asked me," Robinson wrote, "if some sort of memorial tablet could not be erected in the church in memory of Ida. It has just occurred to me that in making the cement tiles for the roof, you might carve her name on one that will be placed on the peak of the church. I'm sure she would like that idea. She was just that kind of a person. It will be away up there where only God can see it!"

Tiles can be broken and it seemed to MacLean that this was too precious a responsibility to entrust to so uncertain a keeper. When the last tile had been laid, a capping was built on the end gable of the west wall. It took several days of

painstaking effort to lay the capping of cement blocks on the steeply-inclined wall. Most of the work had to be supervised carefully by MacLean on top of the rickety scaffolding.

Finally the last block had been laid over the bricks that comprised the wall. It was nearing one o'clock in the afternoon, closing time for the masons, who were anxious to be gone.

"All right, Zintchem," he said to the man helping him, "that finishes our work up here. Get you off to your gardens or your wife will be after you."

With a wide grin the young man cleaned his trowel in the small tin of water at his side, and gathering up his belongings, made the perilous trip to the ground many feet below. For a long while MacLean sat on the small board that was stretched between two crossbars of the scaffolding, waiting for the cement to harden at the very peak of the gable. He looked at the quiet scene that lay around him. A palm tree waved idly in the faint warm breeze, its bunch of oil nuts just level with his head. Beyond, the lush foliage of the jungle sparkled in the sunlight. A great peace filled his soul. Another job was finished, the whole church was now roofed.

The cement had dried sufficiently. Carefully, almost reverently, as if performing a sacred vow, he took a small knife and began to carve out of the cement the one word. It took a long time to get it all even, dug deep into the mixture. At last it was finished. He was kneeling on the scaffolding during the operation, and doffing his hat he continued to kneel, dedicating the building to God, praying that in all its ministry it would be worthy of the one whose name he had just inscribed in the fast-hardening cement.

And so it is that between heaven and earth a simple memorial lies embedded deep and lasting—the one word IDA.



## THE AUTHORS

LLEWELLYN K. ANDERSON is a Canadian by birth, the son of a Presbyterian pastor. He was graduated from McGill University, and from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1926. He began service at once in Cameroun, West Africa, under the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. While stationed at Bafia, he had responsibility for 76 churches and groups. During furloughs he earned his Ph.D. degree in linguistics from Princeton University. In 1939 Dr. Anderson was appointed secretary of the Board for Latin America and West Africa, and in 1950 returned to Cameroun as Field Representative for the West Africa Mission.

W. SHERMAN SKINNER is the son of a Presbyterian pastor who served the church at Gouverneur, New York, for 42 years. He was educated at Colgate and Princeton Universities and at Princeton Theological Seminary. He also studied at the Universities of Marburg and Berlin. Dr. Skinner has had three pastorates, all in Pennsylvania: First Presbyterian Church, Bethlehem (1933-36), First Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Philadelphia (1936-47), and East Liberty Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh (since 1947). From 1941-52 he served as President of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church. He is a trustee of Princeton Theological Seminary.

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